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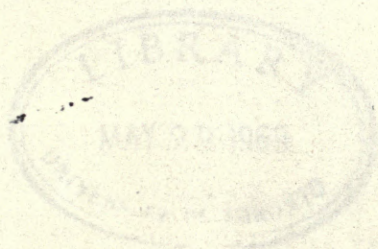


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HONORÉ DE BALZAC

TRANSLATED BY

KATHARINE PRESCOTT WORMELEY

GOBSECK



ROBERTS BROTHERS

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BALZAC'S NOVELS.

Translated by Miss K. P. WORMELEY.

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- BÉATRIX.
- DAUGHTER OF EVE.
- THE GALLERY OF ANTIQUITIES.
- GOBSECK.

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THE COMEDY OF HUMAN LIFE

By H. DE BALZAC

SCENES FROM PARISIAN LIFE

GOBSECK.

THE SECRETS OF THE PRINCESSE DE CADIGNAN.

UNCONSCIOUS COMEDIANS.

ANOTHER STUDY OF WOMAN.

COMEDIES PLAYED GRATIS.

VOL

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TO MONSIEUR LE BARON BARCHOU DE PENHOËN.

Among all the pupils at Vendôme, we are, I think, the only ones who have met again in the career of letters — we who are cultivating philosophy at an age when we ought to be cultivating only the *De Viris*!

Here is the book which I was making when we met, and you were toiling at your noble work on German philosophy. Thus, neither of us has missed his vocation. In seeing your name here, you will perhaps feel as much pleasure as the fact of thus inscribing it affords to

Your old friend and schoolmate,

DE BALZAC.

GOBSECK.

At eleven o'clock one evening, during the winter of 1829-1830, two persons who were not members of the family were still seated in the salon of the Vicomtesse de Grandlieu. One of them, a young and very good-looking man, took leave on hearing the clock strike the hour. When the sound of his carriage-wheels echoed from the courtyard, the viscountess, seeing no one present but her brother and a family friend who were finishing their game of piquet, went up to her daughter as she stood before the fireplace, apparently examining a fire-screen of shaded porcelain while she listened to the sound of the same wheels in a manner to justify the mother's anxiety.

“Camille, if you continue to behave toward that young Comte de Restaud as you have done this evening, you will oblige me to close my doors to him. Listen to me, my child; if you have confidence in my affection, let me guide you in life. At seventeen years of age, a girl is unable to judge of either the future, or the past, or of certain social considerations.

I shall make only one remark to you: Monsieur de Restaud has a mother who would squander millions, — a woman ill-born, a Demoiselle Goriot, who, in her youth, caused people to talk about her. She behaved so badly to her father that she does not deserve to have so good a son. The young count adores her, and stands by her with a filial piety which is worthy of all praise; he also takes the utmost care of his brother and sister. However admirable such conduct may be," continued the viscountess, in a pointed manner, "so long as the mother lives, all parents would fear to trust the future and the fortune of a daughter to young Restaud."

"I have overheard a few words which make me desirous of intervening between you and Mademoiselle de Grandlieu," said the friend of the family, suddenly. "I've won, Monsieur le comte," he said, turning to his adversary. "I leave you now and rush to the succor of your niece."

"This is what is called having lawyer's ears," cried the viscountess. "My dear Derville, how could you overhear what I was saying in a low voice to Camille?"

"I saw your look and understood it," replied Derville, sitting down on a sofa at the corner of the fireplace.

The uncle took a seat beside his niece, and Madame

de Grandlieu placed herself on a low chair between her daughter and Derville.

"It is high time, Madame la vicomtesse, that I should tell you a little tale which will modify the opinion you have formed as to the fortunes of Comte Ernest de Restaud."

"A tale!" cried Camille. "Begin it, quick! monsieur."

Derville cast a look at Madame de Grandlieu which signified that the story he was about to tell would interest her.

The Vicomtesse de Grandlieu, by her fortune and the antiquity of her name, was one of the most distinguished women of the faubourg Saint-Germain, and it may not seem natural that a Parisian lawyer should speak to her familiarly, and treat her in a manner so apparently cavalier; but the phenomenon is easily explained. Madame de Grandlieu, who returned to France with the royal family, came to reside in Paris, where she lived, at first, on a stipend granted by Louis XVIII. from the Civil List, — a situation that was quite intolerable. Derville, the lawyer, chanced to discover certain legal blunders in the sale which the Republic had made of the hôtel de Grandlieu, and he asserted that it ought to be restored to the viscountess. He undertook the case for a certain fee, and won it. Encouraged by this success, he sued a

fraternity of monks, and harassed them legally, until he obtained the restitution of the forest of Liceney. He also recovered a number of shares in the Orléans canal, and certain parcels of real estate with which the Emperor had endowed a few public institutions.

In this way the fortune of Madame de Grandlieu, restored to her by the care and ability of the young lawyer, amounted to an income of sixty thousand francs a year, before the law of indemnity (which restored to her enormous sums of money) had been passed. A man of the highest honor, learned, modest, and excellent company, he became, henceforth, the "friend of the family." Though his conduct to Madame de Grandlieu had won him the respect and the business of the best houses of the faubourg Saint-Germain, he never profited by that favor as a more ambitious man would have done. He resisted the proposals of the viscountess to sell his practice and enter the magistracy, a career in which, thanks to her influence, he would certainly have obtained a very rapid advancement. With the exception of the hôtel de Grandlieu, where he sometimes passed an evening, he never went into society unless to keep up his connections. It was fortunate for him that his talents had been brought to light by his devotion to the interests of Madame de Grandlieu, otherwise he would have run the risk of losing his practice altogether. Derville had not the soul of a pettifogger.

Ever since Comte Ernest de Restaud had been received in Madame de Grandlieu's salon and Derville had discovered Camille's sympathy for the young man, he had become as assiduous in his own visits as any dandy of the Chaussée-d'Antin newly admitted to the circles of the noble faubourg. A few days before the evening on which our story opens, he was standing near Camille at a ball when he said to her, motioning to the young count:—

"Is n't it a pity that young fellow has n't two or three millions?"

"Do you call it a pity? I don't think so," she answered. "Monsieur de Restaud has great talent, he is well-educated, and the minister with whom he is placed thinks highly of him. I have no doubt he will become a very remarkable man. Such a *young fellow* will find all the fortune he wants whenever he comes to power."

"Yes, but suppose he were rich now?"

"Suppose he were rich?" echoed Camille, coloring. "Oh! then all the girls in society would be quarrelling for him," she added, with a nod at the quadrilles.

"And then, perhaps," said the lawyer, slyly, "Madoiselle de Grandlieu would not be the only one on whom his eyes would turn. Why do you blush? You have a liking for him, have n't you? Come, tell me."

Camille rose hastily.

"She loves him," thought Derville.

Since that evening Camille had shown the lawyer very unusual attentions, perceiving that he approved of her inclination for the young count. Until then, although she was not ignorant of the many obligations of her family to Derville, she had always shown him more courtesy than real friendship, more civility than feeling; her manners, and also the tone of her voice, had let him know the distance that conventions placed between them. Gratitude is a debt which children will not always accept as part of their inheritance.

"This affair," said Derville to the viscountess, on the evening when our story opens, "recalls to me the only romantic circumstances of my life — You are laughing already," he said, interrupting himself, "at the idea of a lawyer talking of romance. But I have been twenty-five years of age as well as others; and by that time of life I had already seen very strange things. I shall begin by telling you about a personage whom you can never know, — a usurer. Imagine vividly that pale, wan visage, to which I wish the Academy would allow me to apply the word 'moon-faced;' it looked like tarnished silver. My usurer's hair was flat, carefully combed, and sandy-gray in color. The features of his face, impassible as that of Talleyrand, had apparently been cast in iron. His

little eyes, yellow as those of a weasel, had scarcely any lashes and seemed to fear the light; but the peak of an old cap protected them. His pointed nose was so pockmarked about the tip that you might have compared it to a gimlet. He had the thin lips of those little old men and alchemists painted by Rembrandt or Metzu. The man spoke low, in a gentle voice, and was never angry. His age was a problem: it was impossible to say whether he was old before his time, or whether he so spared his youth that it lasted him forever.

"All things in his room were clean and shabby, resembling, from the green cover of the desk to the bedside carpet, the frigid sanctum of old maids who spend their days in rubbing their furniture. In winter, the embers on his hearth, buried beneath a heap of ashes, smoked, but never blazed. His actions, from the hour of his rising to his evening fits of coughing, were subjected to the regularity of clock-work. He was in some respects an automaton, whom sleep wound up. If you touch a beetle crossing a piece of paper, it will stop and feign to be dead; just so this man would interrupt his speech if a carriage passed, in order not to force his voice. Imitating Fontenelle, he economized the vital movement and concentrated all human sentiments upon the I. Consequently, his life flowed on without producing more noise than the

sand of an ancient hour-glass. Occasionally, his victims made great outcries, and were furious; after which a dead silence fell, as in kitchens after a duck's neck is wrung.

"Towards evening the man-of-notes became an ordinary mortal; his metals were transformed into a human heart. If he was satisfied with his day he rubbed his hands, and from the chinks and wrinkles of his face a vapor of gayety exhaled, — for it is impossible to otherwise describe the silent play of his muscles, where a sensation, like the noiseless laugh of Leather-Stocking, seemed to lie. In his moments of greatest joy his words were always monosyllabic, and the expression of his countenance invariably negative.

"Such was the neighbor whom chance bestowed upon me at a house where I was living, in the rue des Grès, when I was still a second clerk and had only just finished my third year in the Law-school. This house, which has no courtyard, is damp and gloomy. The rooms get no light except from the street. The cloistral arrangement which divides the building into rooms of equal size, with no issue but a long corridor lighted from above, shows that the house was formerly part of a convent. At this sad aspect the gayety of even a dashing young blood would die away as he entered the usurer's abode. The man and his house resembled each other, like the rock and its barnacle.

"The only being with whom he held communication, socially speaking, was myself. He came to my room, sometimes, to ask for tinder, or to borrow a book or a newspaper, and at night he allowed me to enter his cell, where we talked if he happened to be good-humored. These marks of confidence were the results of four years' vicinity and my virtuous conduct, which, for want of money, very closely resembled his own. Had he relations, or friends? Was he rich or poor? No one could have answered those questions. During these years I never saw any money in his possession. His wealth was no doubt in the cellars of the Bank of France. He collected his notes himself, racing through Paris on legs as sinewy as those of a deer. He was a martyr to his caution. One day, by accident, he showed a bit of gold: a double napoleon made its escape, heaven knows how! through his waistcoat pocket; another tenant, who was following him up the staircase, picked it up and gave it to him.

" 'That is not mine,' he answered, with a gesture of surprise. 'Do you suppose that I have money? Should I live as I do if I were rich?'

"In the mornings he made his own coffee on a tin heater which always stood in the dingy corner of his fireplace. His dinner was brought from a cookshop. Our old portress went up at a fixed hour and put his room in order. And, to cap all, by a singularity

which Sterne would have called predestination, the man was named Gobseck.

"Later, when I managed his affairs, I discovered that when we first knew each other he was sixty-six years old. He was born about 1740, in the suburbs of Antwerp, of a Dutchman and a Jewess; his name was Jean-Esther van Gobseck. You remember, of course, how all Paris was excited about the murder of a woman called *La belle Hollandaise*? When I chanced to speak of it to my neighbor, he said, without expressing the slightest interest or surprise:—

" 'That was my great-niece.'

"He made no other comment on the death of his only known heir, the granddaughter of his sister. From the newspapers I learned that *La belle Hollandaise* was called Sarah van Gobseck. When I asked him by what strange chance his great-niece bore his name, he replied, with a smile:—

" 'The women of our family never marry.'

"This singular man had always refused, through four generations, to know, or even see, a single female member of his family. He abhorred his heirs, and could not conceive that his wealth would ever be possessed by others, even after his death. His mother had despatched him as cabin-boy, when ten years old, to the Dutch possessions in India, where he had lived as he could for twenty years. The wrinkles of his

yellow forehead covered the secrets of horrible events, awful terrors, unhopèd-for luck, romantic disappointment, and infinite joys; also there were signs of hunger endured, love trodden underfoot, fortune compromised, lost, and re-found, life many a time in danger, and saved, perhaps, by sudden decisions, the urgency for which excuses cruelty. He had known Monsieur de Lally, Admiral Simeuse, Monsieur de Kergarouët, Monsieur d'Estaing, the Bailli de Suffren, Monsieur de Portenduère, Lord Cornwallis, Lord Hastings, the father of Tippu Sahib, and Tippu Sahib himself; for this Savoyard, who had served the King of Delhi, and contributed not a little to found the power of the Mahrattas, had done business with him. He also had dealings with Victor Hughes, and several other famous corsairs, for he lived for a long time on the island of Saint Thomas. He had attempted so many things in quest of fortune that he even tried to discover the gold of that tribe of savages so celebrated near Buenos Ayres. He was not a stranger to any of the great events of the war of American Independence. But when he spoke of India or America, which he never did with others, and rarely with me, he seemed to think he had committed an indiscretion, and regretted it.

“If humanity, if social fellowship, are a religion, he must be considered an atheist. Though I set myself to examine him, I must admit, to my confusion, that

up to the very last moment his heart was impenetrable to me. I sometimes asked myself to what sex he belonged. If all usurers resemble him, I believe they form a neutral species. Was he faithful to the religion of his mother, and did he look upon all Christians as his prey? Had he made himself a Catholic, a Mohammedan, a Brahman, a Lutheran? I never knew his religious opinions, but he seemed to me more indifferent than sceptical.

"One evening I entered the room of this man transmuted to gold, whom his victims (he called them clients) addressed either in jest or satire as 'Papa Gobseck.' I found him in his armchair, motionless as a statue, his eyes fixed on the mantel of the fireplace, on which he seemed to be scanning memoranda of accounts. A smoky lamp cast out a gleam which, far from coloring his face, brought out its pallor. He looked at me silently, and pointed to the chair which awaited me. 'Of what is this strange being thinking?' I said to myself. 'Does he know that God exists? that there are feelings, women, happiness?' I pitied him as I pity a sick man. And yet I also understood that he possessed by thought the earth he had travelled over, dug into, weighed, sifted, and worked.

"'Good-evening, papa Gobseck,' I said.

"He turned his head in my direction, his thick

black eyebrows slightly contracting; in him that peculiar movement was equivalent to the gayest smile of a Southerner.

“‘You seem as gloomy,’ I continued, ‘as you were the day you heard of the bankruptcy of that publisher whose cleverness you have always admired, though you were made its victim.’

“‘Victim?’ he said, in a surprised tone.

“‘Did n’t he, in order to obtain his certificate of insolvency, pay up your account with notes subject to the settlement in bankruptcy, and when the business was re-established did n’t those notes come under the reduction named in that settlement?’

“‘He was shrewd,’ replied the old man, ‘but I nipped him back.’

“‘Perhaps you hold a few protested notes?—this is the thirtieth of the month, you know.’

“‘I had never before mentioned money to him. He raised his eyes to me, satirically; then, in his softest voice, the tones of which were like the sounds a pupil draws from his flute when he has no mouthpiece, he said:—

“‘I am amusing myself.’

“‘Then you *do* find amusement sometimes?’

“‘Do you think there are no poets but those who scribble verses?’ he asked, shrugging his shoulders, and casting a look of pity on me.

“‘Poesy in that head!’ I thought to myself; for at that time I knew nothing of his life.

“‘What existence is there as brilliant as mine?’ he continued, and his eyes brightened. ‘You are young; you have the ideas of your blood; you see faces of women in your embers, I see nothing but coals in mine. You believe in everything, I believe in nothing. Keep your illusions, if you can. I am going to reckon up life to you. Whether you travel about the world, or whether you stay in your chimney-corner with a wife, there comes an age when life is nothing more than a habit, practised in some preferred spot. Happiness then consists in the exercise of our faculties applied to real objects. Outside of those two precepts all else is false. My principles have varied like those of other men; I have changed with each latitude in which I lived. What Europe admires, Asia punishes. A vice in Paris is a necessity after you pass the Azores. Nothing is a fixed fact here below; conventions alone exist, and those are modified by climate. To one who has flung himself forcibly into every social mould, convictions and moralities are nothing more than words without weight. There remains within us but the one true sentiment which Nature implanted there; namely, the instinct of preservation. In European societies this instinct is called *self-interest*. If you had lived as long as I have, you

would know that there is but one material thing the value of which is sufficiently certain to be worth a man's while to care for it. That thing is — GOLD. Gold represents all human forces. I have travelled; I have seen in all lands plains and mountains: plains are tiresome, mountains fatiguing; hence, places and regions signify nothing. As for customs and morals, man is the same everywhere; everywhere the struggle between wealth and poverty exists; everywhere it is inevitable. Better, therefore, to be the one to take advantage, than the one to be taken advantage of. Everywhere you will find muscular folk who work their way, and lymphatic folk who fret and worry. Everywhere pleasures are the same; for all emotions are exhausted, and nothing survives of them but the single sentiment of *vanity*. Vanity is always I. Vanity is never truly satisfied except by floods of gold. Desires need time, or physical means, or care. Well! gold contains all those things in the germ, and will give them in reality. None but fools or sick men can find pleasure in playing cards every night to see if they can win a few francs. None but fools can spend their time in asking each other what happens, and whether Madame So-and-so occupies her sofa alone or in company, or whether she has more blood than lymph, more ardor than virtue. None but dupes can think themselves useful to their fellow-men, by

laying down political principles to govern events which are still unforeseen. None but ninnies can like to go through the same routine, pacing up and down like animals in a cage; dressing for others, eating for others, glorifying themselves about a horse or a carriage which their neighbor can't copy for at least three days! Isn't that the life of your Parisians, reduced to a few sentences? Let us look at life on a higher plane. There, happiness consists either in strong emotions which wear out life, or in regular occupations worked, as it were, by mechanism at stated times. Above these forms of happiness there exists the curiosity (said to be noble) of knowing the secrets of Nature, or of producing a certain imitation of her effects. Isn't that, in two words, art or knowledge, passion or tranquillity? Well! all human passions, heightened by the play of social interests, parade before me, who live in tranquillity. As for your scientific curiosity, — a sort of combat in which man is always worsted! — I substitute for that a penetration into the secret springs that move humanity. In a word, I possess the world without fatigue, and the world has not the slightest hold upon me. Listen to me,' he continued. 'I will tell you the events of my morning, and you can judge by them of my pleasures.'

"He rose, went to the door and bolted it, drew a

curtain of old tapestry, the brass rings grinding on the rod, and sat down again.

“ ‘This morning,’ he said, ‘I had only two notes to collect; the others I had given last evening to clients in place of ready money. So much made, you know! for in discounting them I deduct the cost of collection, taking forty sous for a street cab. A pretty thing it would be if a client made me cross all Paris for six francs discount, — I, who am under bonds to no one! — I, who pay no more than seven francs in taxes! Well, the first note, for a thousand francs, presented by a young man, a dashing fellow, with a spangled waistcoat, eyeglass, tilbury, English horse, etc., was signed by one of the prettiest women in Paris, married to a rich man, — a count. Why should this countess have signed that note (void in law but excellent in fact)? For such poor women fear the scandal which a protested note would cause in their homes; they’ll even sell themselves rather than not take up the note. I wanted to know the secret value of that paper. Was it folly, imprudence, love, or charity? The second note, also for a thousand francs, signed “Jenny Malvaut,” was presented to me by a linen-draper in a fair way to be ruined. No person having credit at the Bank ever comes to me; the first step taken from my door to my desk means despair, bankruptcy on the verge of discovery, and, above all,

the refusal of aid from many bankers. That's how it is that I see none but stags at bay, hunted by the pack of their creditors. The countess lived in the rue du Helder, and Jenny in the rue Montmartre. How many conjectures came into my mind as I went from here this morning! If those two women were not ready to pay, they would receive me with more respect than if I had been their own father. What grimaces that countess would play off upon me in place of her thousand francs! She'd pretend to be cordial, and speak in the coaxing voice such women reserve for holders of notes; she'd shower cajoling words upon me, perhaps implore me, and I—'

"Here the old man cast his eye upon me.

" 'and I—immovable!' he went on. 'I am there as an Avenger; I appear as Remorse. But enough of such fancies. I got there.

" ' "Madame la comtesse is still in bed," said the lady's-maid.

" ' "When will she be visible?"

" ' "At noon."

" ' "Is Madame la comtesse ill?"

" ' "No, monsieur, but she did not return from a ball till three in the morning."

" ' "My name is Gobseck; tell her my name, and say I shall return at noon."

" ' And off I went, signing my presence on the carpet

that covered the stairs. I like to muddy the floors of rich men, not from petty meanness, but to let them feel the claws of necessity. Reached the rue Montmartre, found a shabby sort of house, pushed open the *porte-cochère*, and saw a damp, dark courtyard, where the sun never penetrates. The porter's lodge was dingy, the glass of the window looked like the sleeve of a wadded dressing-gown worn too long; it was greasy, cracked, and discolored.

“ “ “Mademoiselle Jenny Malvaut?”

“ “ “She's out; but if you have come about a note, the money is here.”

“ “ “I'll come back,” I said.

“ “ “The moment I heard the porter had the money I wanted to know that girl. I felt sure she was pretty. I spent the morning looking at the engravings displayed on the boulevard. Then, as twelve o'clock sounded, I entered the salon which adjoins the bedroom of Madame la comtesse.

“ “ “Madame has just this moment rung for me,” said the maid. “I don't think she will see you yet.”

“ “ “I'll wait,” I answered, seating myself in an armchair.

“ “ “I heard the blinds open in madame's room; then the maid came hurrying in, and said to me:—

“ “ “Come in, monsieur.”

“ “ “By the softness of her voice I knew very well her

mistress was not ready to pay. What a beautiful woman I then saw! She had flung a camel's-hair shawl round her shoulders so hastily that her shape could be guessed in all its nudity. She wore a night-gown trimmed with frills as white as snow, which showed an annual expense of over two thousand francs for washing. Her black hair fell in heavy curls from a silk handkerchief, carelessly knotted round her head after the Creole fashion. Her bed was the picture of disorder, caused, no doubt, by troubled sleep. A painter would have paid a good deal to have stood a few moments in the midst of this scene. Under draperies voluptuously looped up were pillows on a down quilt of sky-blue silk, the lace of their trimming showing to advantage on that azure background. On a bear's skin, stretched between the carved lion's paws of the mahogany bedstead, lay white satin shoes, tossed off with the carelessness that comes of the fatigue of a ball. On a chair was a rumpled gown, the sleeves touching the floor. Stockings which a breath of wind might have blown away were twisted round the legs of a chair. A fan of value, half-opened, glittered on the chimney-piece. The drawers of the bureau were open. Flowers, diamonds, gloves, a bouquet, a belt, were thrown here and there about the room. I breathed a vague odor of perfumes. All was luxury and disorder, beauty without harmony.

Already for this woman, or for her lover, poverty, crouching beneath these riches, raised its head and made them feel its sharpened teeth. The tired face of the countess was in keeping with that room strewn with the fragments of a fête. Those scattered gewgaws were pitiful; collected on her person the night before, they had brought her adoration. These vestiges of love, blasted by remorse, that image of a life of dissipation, of luxury, of tumult, betrayed the efforts of Tantalus to grasp eluding pleasures. A few red spots on the young woman's face showed the delicacy of her skin; but her features seemed swollen, and the brown circle beneath her eyes was more marked than was natural. Still, nature was too vigorous within her to let these indications of a life of folly injure her beauty. Her eyes sparkled. Like an Herodias of Leonardo da Vinci (I've sold those pictures), she was magnificent in life and vigor; there was nothing paltry in her form or in her features; she inspired love, and she seemed to me to be stronger than love. She pleased me. It is long since my heart has beaten. I was paid! I'd give a thousand francs any day for a sensation that recalled to me my youth.

"“Monsieur," she said, pointing to a chair, "will you have the kindness to wait for your money?"

"“Until to-morrow, at noon, madame," I replied, folding the note I had presented to her. "I have no

legal right to protest until then." In my own mind, I was saying to myself: "Pay for your luxury, pay for your name, pay for your pleasures, pay for the monopoly you enjoy! To secure their property rights the rich have invented courts and judges and the guillotine,—candles, in which poor ignorant creatures fly and singe themselves. But for you, who sleep in silk and satin, there's something else: there's remorse, grinding of teeth behind those smiles of yours, jaws of fantastic lions opening to craunch you!"

" "A protest!" she cried, looking me in the face; "you can't mean it! Would you have so little consideration for me?"

" "If the king himself owed me money, madame, and did not pay it, I'd summons him even quicker than another debtor."

" "At this moment some one knocked at the door.

" " "I am not visible," said the countess, imperiously.

" " "Anastasie, I want to see you very much."

" " "Not just now, dear," she answered, in a milder voice, but not a kind one.

" " "What nonsense! I hear you talking to some one," said a man, who could be, of course, none other than the count, as he entered the room.

" "The countess looked at me; I understood her, and from that moment she became my slave. There

was a time in my life, young man, when I might, perhaps, have been fool enough not to protest. In 1763, at Pondicherry, I forgave a woman who swindled me finely. I deserved it; why did I ever trust her!

““What does monsieur want?” said the count.

““I saw that woman tremble from head to foot; the white and satiny skin of her throat grew rough and turned, as they say, to goose-flesh. As for me, I laughed inwardly, without a muscle of my face quivering.

““Monsieur is one of my tradesmen,” she said.

““The count turned his back upon me. I pulled the note half out of my pocket. Seeing that inexorable action, the young woman came close up to me and offered me a diamond ring.

““Take it, and go!” she said.

““That was simply an exchange of properties. I bowed, gave her the note, and left the room. The diamond was worth fully twelve hundred francs. In the courtyard I found a swarm of valets, brushing their liveries, blacking their boots, or cleaning the sumptuous equipages. “That,” I said to myself, “is what brings these people to me. That’s what drives them to steal millions decently, to betray their country. Not to soil his boots by going afoot, the great lord—or he who imitates the lord—takes, once for all, a bath of mud!” I was thinking all that, when

the great gates opened, and in drove the cabriolet of the young man who had brought me the note.

““Monsieur,” I said to him as he got out, “here are two hundred francs, which I beg you to return to Madame la comtesse; and you will please say to her that I hold at her disposition the article she placed in my hands this morning.”

““He took the two hundred francs with a sarcastic smile, which seemed to say: “Ha! she has paid! so much the better!” I read upon that young man’s face the future of the countess. The pretty, fair youth, a gambler without emotion, will ruin himself, ruin her, ruin her husband, ruin her children, spend their dowries, and cause greater devastation through salons than a battery of grape-shot through a regiment. Then I went to the rue Montmartre to find Mademoiselle Jenny Malvaut. I climbed up a steep little staircase. When I reached the fifth floor, I entered a small apartment of two rooms only, where all was as clean and bright as a new ducat. I couldn’t see the slightest trace of dust on the furniture of the first room, where I was received by Mademoiselle Jenny, a true Parisian young woman, very simply dressed; head fresh and elegant, prepossessing manner, chestnut hair, well-combed, raised in two puffs upon the temples, which gave a look of mischief to the eyes, that were clear as crystals. The day-

light, coming through little curtains hanging at the windows, threw a soft reflection on her modest face. Round her were numerous bits of linen, cut in shapes which showed me her regular occupation; it was evidently that of a seamstress. She sat there like the genius of solitude. When I presented the note I said that I had not found her at home that morning.

“““ But,” she said, “the money was with the porter.”

“““ I pretended not to hear.

“““ Mademoiselle goes out early, it seems?”

“““ I seldom go out at all; but if one works at night one must take a bath in the daytime.”

“““ I looked at her. With one glance I could guess the truth about her. Here was a girl condemned to toil by poverty, belonging, no doubt, to a family of honest farmers; for I noticed a certain ruddiness in her face peculiar to those who are born in the country. I can't tell you what air of virtue it was that breathed from her features, but I seemed to have entered an atmosphere of sincerity and innocence; my lungs were freshened. Poor child! she believed in something! Her simple bedstead of painted wood was surmounted by a crucifix wreathed by two branches of box. I was half-touched. I felt disposed to offer her money at twelve per cent, only to enable her to purchase some good business. “But,” I said to myself, “I daresay

there's some little cousin who would get money on her signature and eat up all she has." So I went away, being on my guard against such generous ideas, for I've often had occasion to notice that when benevolence does not injure the benefactor it is sure to destroy the person benefited. When you came in I was thinking what a good little wife Jenny Malvaut would make. I compared her pure and solitary life with that of the countess, who, with one foot over the precipice, is about to roll down into the gulf of vice!

"'Well!' he continued, after a moment of profound silence, during which I examined him, 'do you now think there is no enjoyment in penetrating thus to the inner folds of the human heart, in espousing the life of others, and seeing that life bared before me? Sights forever varied! — hideous sores, mortal sorrows, scenes of love, miseries which the waters of the Seine await, joys of youth leading to the scaffold, despairing laughter, sumptuous festivals! Yesterday, a tragedy, — some good father of a family smothers himself with charcoal because he cannot feed his children. To-morrow, a comedy, — a young man trying to play me the scene of Monsieur Dimanche, varied to suit the times. You have heard the eloquence of our modern preachers vaunted; I've occasionally wasted my time listening to them; they have some-

times made me change my opinion, but my conduct, — as some one, I forget who, says, — never! Well, those good priests, and your Mirabeau and Vergniaud and others are stutterers compared with my orators. Often a young girl in love, an old merchant on the downhill to bankruptcy, a mother trying to hide her son's crime, an artist without food, a great man on the decline of his popularity, who, for want of money, is about to lose the fruit of his efforts, — such beings have made me shudder by the power of their words. Those splendid actors play for me only, but they do not deceive me. My glance is like that of God; it enters the heart. Nothing is hidden from me. Nothing is denied to him who opens and closes the mouth of the sack. I am rich enough to buy the consciences of those who manage the ministers of the nation, — be they ushers or mistresses: is n't that power? I can have beautiful women and tender caresses: is n't that love? Power and pleasure, — don't those two things sum up the whole of your social order? There's a dozen of us such as that in Paris; silent, unknown kings, the arbiters of your destinies. Isn't life itself a machine to which money imparts motion? Know this: means are confounded with results; you will never attain to separating the soul from the senses, spirit from matter. Gold is the spirituality of your present social being. Bound by one and the

same interest, we — that dozen men — meet together one day in every week, at the café Thémis, near the Pont Neuf. There we reveal the mysteries of finance. No apparent wealth can mislead us; we possess the secrets of all families. We keep a species of *black book*, in which are recorded most important notes on the public credit, on the Bank, on commerce. Casuists of the Bourse, we form an Inquisition where the most indifferent actions of men of any fortune are judged and analyzed, and our judgment is always true. One of us watches over the judiciary body; another, the financial body; a third, the administrative body; a fourth the commercial body. As for me, I keep an eye on eldest sons, on artists, men of fashion, gamblers, — the most stirring part of Paris. Every one whom we severally deal with tells us his neighbor's secrets: betrayed passions and bruised vanities are garrulous; vices, vengeance, disappointments are the best police force in the world. My brethren, like myself, have enjoyed all things, are sated with all things, and have come to love power and money solely for power and money themselves. Here,' he added, pointing to his cold and barren room, 'the fiery lover, insulted by a look, and drawing his sabre at a word, kneels and prays to me with clasped hands. Here the proudest merchant, here the woman vain of her beauty, here the dashing soldier, pray, one and all, with tears of

rage or anguish in their eyes. Here the most celebrated artists, here the writer whose name is promised to posterity, pray, likewise. Here, too,' he added, laying his hand upon his forehead, 'are the scales in which are weighed the inheritances and the dividends of all Paris. Do you think *now* that there are no enjoyments beneath this livid mask whose immobility has so often amazed you?' he said, turning toward me his wan face, which seemed to smell of money.

"I returned home stupefied. That shrunken old man grew larger; he had changed, before my very eyes, into some fantastic image personifying the power of gold. Life, men, filled me with horror. 'Are all things to be measured by money?' I asked myself. I remember that I did not go to sleep that night till very late. Mounds of gold rose up around me. The beautiful countess filled my thoughts. I confess, to my shame, that her image completely eclipsed that of the simple and chaste creature doomed to toil and to obscurity. But on the morrow, through the mists of waking, the gentle Jenny appeared to me in all her beauty, and I thought of her alone."

"Will you have a glass of *eau sucrée*," said the viscountess, interrupting Derville.

"Gladly," he replied.

"But I don't see, in all this, anything that concerns us," said Madame de Grandlieu, ringing the bell.

"Sardanapalus!" exclaimed Derville, launching his favorite oath. "I am going to wake up Mademoiselle Camille presently by showing her that her happiness has depended, until recently, on papa Gobseck. But the old man is now dead, at the age of eighty-nine, and the Comte de Restaud will soon come into possession of a noble fortune. This needs some explanation. As for Jenny Malvaut, you know her; she is now my wife."

"Poor boy!" exclaimed the viscountess, "he would tell that before a score of people, with his usual frankness."

"Yes, I'd shout it to the universe," said the lawyer.

"Drink your water, my poor Derville. You'll never be anything but the happiest and the best of men."

"I left you in the rue du Helder, with a countess," cried the uncle, waking from a doze. "What did you do there?"

"A few days after my conversation with the old Dutchman," resumed Derville, "I took my licentiate's degree and became, soon after, a barrister. The confidence the old miser had in me increased greatly. He consulted me, gratuitously, on the ticklish affairs in which he embarked after obtaining certain data, — affairs which, to practical minds, would have seemed very dangerous. That man, over whom no human

being could have gained any power, listened to my counsels with a sort of respect. It is true that they usually helped him. At last, on the day when I was made head-clerk of the office in which I had worked three years, I left the house in the rue des Grès, and went to live with my patron, who gave me board and lodging, and one hundred and twenty francs a month. That was a fine day for me! When I said good-bye to the old usurer, he expressed neither friendship nor regret; he did not ask me to come and see him; he merely gave me one of those glances which seemed to reveal in him the gift of second-sight. At the end of a week, however, I received a visit from him; he brought me a rather difficult affair, — a dispossession case, — and he continued his gratuitous consultations with as much freedom as if he paid me. At the end of the second year, from 1818 to 1819, my patron — a man of pleasure, and very extravagant — became involved, and was forced to sell his practice. Although at that time a lawyer's practice had not acquired the exorbitant value it now possesses, my patron almost gave away his in asking no more than one hundred and fifty thousand francs for it. An active, intelligent, and well-trained lawyer might live respectably, pay the interest on that sum, and free himself of the debt in ten years, could he only inspire confidence in some one who would lend him the pur-

chase-money. I, the seventh son of a small bourgeois of Noyon, did not possess one penny, and I knew but one capitalist; namely, papa Gobseck. A daring thought, and some strange gleam of hope, gave me courage to go to him. Accordingly, one evening, I slowly walked to the rue des Grès. My heart beat violently as I knocked at the door of that gloomy house. I remembered what the old miser had told me in former days, when I was far, indeed, from imagining the violence of the agony which began on the threshold of that door. I was now about to pray to him like the rest! 'No, no!' I said to myself, 'an honest man should keep his dignity under all circumstances; no fortune is worth a meanness; I'll make myself as stiff as he.' Since my departure, papa Gobseck had hired my room, in order to have no other neighbor; he had also put a little grated peep-hole into the middle of his door, which he did not open till he recognized my face.

" 'Well!' he said, in his stutty little voice, 'so your patron sells his practice.'

" 'How did you know that? He has not mentioned it to a soul but me.'

" 'The lips of the old man drew toward the corners of his mouth precisely like curtains, and that mute smile was accompanied by a frigid glance.

" 'It needed that fact to bring you here to me,' he

said, in a dry tone, and after a pause, during which I remained somewhat confounded.

“ ‘Listen to me, Monsieur Gobseck,’ I said, with as much calmness as I was able to muster in presence of that old man, who fixed upon me his impassible eyes, the clear flame of which disturbed me.

“ ‘He made a gesture as if to say, ‘Speak.’

“ ‘I know how difficult it is to move you. I should waste my eloquence in trying to make you see the position of a clerk without a penny, whose only hope is in you, and who has no other heart in the world but yours in which his future is understood. Let us drop the question of heart; business is business, and not romance or sentimentality. Here are the facts: My patron’s practice brings him about twenty thousand francs a year, but in my hands I think it would bring forty thousand. He wants to sell it for one hundred and fifty thousand. I feel, here,’ I continued, striking my forehead, ‘that if you will lend me the purchase-money I can pay it off in ten years.’

“ ‘That’s talking,’ replied papa Gobseck, stretching out his hand and pressing mine. ‘Never, since I have been in business,’ he went on, ‘has any one declared more plainly the object of his visit. Security?’ he said, looking me over from head to foot. ‘Naught’ — adding, after a pause, ‘How old are you?’

“ ‘Twenty-five in a few days,’ I replied; ‘except for that I could n’t purchase.’ ”

“ ‘True.’ ”

“ ‘Well?’ ”

“ ‘Possibly I may do it.’ ”

“ ‘There’s no time to lose; I am likely to have competitors who will put up the price.’ ”

“ ‘Bring me the certificate of your birth to-morrow morning, and we’ll talk the matter over. I’ll think of it.’ ”

“ The next day, by eight o’clock, I was in the old man’s room. He took the official paper, put on his spectacles, coughed, spat, wrapped his big coat round him, and read the extracts from the register of the mayor’s office carefully. Then he turned the paper and re-turned it, looked at me, coughed again, wriggled in his chair, and said, finally: —

“ ‘This is a matter we will try to arrange.’ I quivered. ‘I get fifty per cent for my money,’ he continued; ‘sometimes one hundred, two hundred, even five hundred per cent.’ I turned pale at these words. ‘But, in consideration of our acquaintance, I shall content myself with twelve and a half per cent interest per—’ He hesitated. ‘Well, yes! for your sake I will be satisfied with thirteen per cent per annum. Will that suit you?’ ”

“ ‘Yes,’ I replied.

“‘But if it is too much,’ he said, ‘speak out, Grotius’ (he often called me Grotius in fun). ‘In asking you thirteen per cent I ply my trade; consider whether you can pay it. I don’t like a man who hobbles to everything. Is it too much?’

“‘No,’ I said, ‘I can meet it by rather more privation.’

“‘*Parbleu!*’ he cried, casting his malicious, oblique glance upon me; ‘make your clients pay it.’

“‘No, by all the devils!’ I cried; ‘it will be I who pay it. I’d cut my hand off sooner than fleece others.’

“‘Fiddle!’ said papa Gobseck.

“‘Besides, a lawyer’s fees go by tariff,’ I continued.

“‘They don’t,’ he said. ‘Not for negotiations, suits for recovery of funds, compromises. You can make thousands of francs, according to the interests involved, out of your conferences, trips, drafts of deeds, memoranda, and other verbiage. You’ll have to learn that sort of thing. I shall recommend you as the cleverest and most knowing of lawyers; I’ll send you such a lot of such cases that all your brother-lawyers will burst with jealousy. Werbrust, Palma, Gignonnet, my friends, shall give you all their disposssession cases, — and God knows how many they are! You’ll thus have two practices, — the one you buy,

and the one I make for you. You ought to give me fifteen per cent, at least, for my hundred and fifty thousand francs.'

" 'So be it, but not a penny more,' I said, with the firmness of a man who will grant nothing further.

" Papa Gobseck relented at this, and seemed pleased with me.

" 'I'll pay the price to your patron myself,' he said, 'so as to secure myself a solid hold on the security.'

" 'Oh! yes, take all the security you want.'

" 'Also, you must give me fifteen bills of exchange, acceptances in blank, for ten thousand francs each.'

" 'Provided that double value be distinctly recorded —'

" 'No!' cried Gobseck, interrupting me. 'Why do you want me to have more confidence in you than you have in me?' I kept silence. 'And also,' he went on, in a good-humored tone, 'you will do all my business without asking fees, as long as I live; is that agreed to?'

" 'Yes, provided there is no further demand made.'

" 'Right!' he said. '*Ah ça!*' added the little old man, after a momentary pause, his face taking, but with difficulty, an air of good-humor, 'you'll allow me to go and see you sometimes?'

" 'It will always give me pleasure.'

“ ‘Yes, but when? In the mornings it would be impossible; you have your business and I have mine.’

“ ‘Come in the evening.’

“ ‘Oh, no!’ he said hastily; ‘you ought to go into society and meet your clients; I, too, I have my friends at the café.’

“ ‘His friends!’ thought I. ‘Well, then,’ I said, ‘why not take the dinner-hour?’

“ ‘That’s it,’ said Gobseck. ‘After the Bourse, about five o’clock. You’ll see me every Wednesday and Saturday. We talk of our affairs like a couple of friends. Ha! ha! I can be gay sometimes. Give me the wing of a partridge and a glass of champagne, and we’ll *talk*. I know many things that can be told in these days; things which will teach you to know men and, above all, women.’

“ ‘So be it for the partridge and the champagne,’ I said.

“ ‘Don’t be extravagant, or you’ll lose my confidence. Get an old woman-servant,—only one, mind; don’t set up an establishment. I shall come and see you to look after your health. I’ve capital invested on your head, he! he! and I ought to keep informed about you. Come back this evening, and bring your patron.’

“ ‘Might I be informed, if there is no indiscretion in asking,’ I said to the old man when we reached the

threshold of his door, 'of what possible importance the certificate of my birth could be in this affair?'.

"Jean-Esther van Gobseck shrugged his shoulders, smiled maliciously, and replied: 'How foolish youth is! Know this, my learned barrister, — you *must* know it to keep from being cheated, — before the age of thirty honesty and talent are still a sort of mortgage to be taken on a man. After that age he is not to be trusted.'

"So saying, he shut the door.

"Three months later I became a barrister, and soon after I had the great good-fortune, madame, of being chosen to undertake the business concerning the restitution of your property. The winning of that suit made me known. In spite of the enormous interest I paid Gobseck, I was able, in five years, to pay off my indebtedness. I married Jenny Malvaut, whom I love sincerely. The likeness between our two lives, our toil, our successes, increased the tie between us. Jenny's uncle, a rich farmer, died, leaving her seventy thousand francs, which helped to pay off my debt. Since that day my life has been nothing but happiness and prosperity — no need, therefore, to say more about myself; nothing is so intolerably dull as a happy man. Let us go back to our personages. About a year after I bought my practice, I was enticed, almost against my will, to a bachelor's breakfast. The party

was the result of a wager lost by one of my legal friends to a young man then much in vogue in the world of fashion. Monsieur Maxime de Trailles, the flower of dandyism in those days, enjoyed a great reputation —”

“And still enjoys it,” said the Comte de Born, interrupting Derville. “No man wears a coat with more style or drives a tandem better than he. Maxime has the art of playing cards, and eating and drinking with more grace than the rest of the world put together. He knows what is what in horses, hats, and pictures. The women dote upon him. He always spends a hundred thousand francs a year, though no one ever heard of his owning property or a single coupon of interest. A type of the knight-errant of salons, boudoirs, and the boulevards, — an amphibious species, half-man, half-woman, — Comte Maxime de Trailles is a singular being, good *at* everything and good *for* nothing, feared and despised, knowing most things, yet ignorant at bottom, just as capable of doing a benefit as of committing a crime, sometimes base, sometimes noble, more covered with mud than stained with blood, having anxieties but no remorse, caring more for digestion than for thought, feigning passions and feeling none. He’s a brilliant ring that might connect the galleys with the highest society. Maxime de Trailles is a man who belongs to that

eminently intelligent class from which sprang Mirabeau, Pitt, Richelieu, but which more frequently supplies the world with Comtes de Horn, Fouquier-Tinville, and Coignards."

"Well!" resumed Derville, after listening to these remarks of Madame de Grandlieu's brother. "I had heard a great deal of that personage from poor Père Goriot, who was one of my clients; but I had always avoided, when I met him in society, the dangerous honor of his acquaintance. However, my friend urged me so strongly to go to his breakfast that I could not escape doing so without being accused of austerity. You can hardly conceive of a bachelor's breakfast, madame. It is a magnificent show of the greatest rarities, — the luxury of a miser who is sumptuous for one day only. On entering, one is struck by the order that reigns on a table so dazzling with silver and glass and damasked linen. Life is there in its flower; the young men are so graceful, so smiling, they speak low, they resemble the newly wedded, — all seems virgin about them. Two hours later you would think that same room was a battlefield after the battle. On all sides broken glasses, twisted and soiled napkins; dishes half-eaten, and repugnant to the eye; shouts that split the ears, sarcastic toasts, a fire of epigrams, malignant jests, purple faces, eyes inflamed, no longer capable of expression, — involun-

tary confidences which tell all! In the midst of this infernal racket, some break bottles, others troll songs, they challenge each other, they kiss or fight; an odious smell arises of a hundred odors, shouts on a hundred tones; no one knows what he eats, or what he drinks, or what he says; some are sad, others garrulous; one man is monomaniacal, and repeats the same word like a clock with the striker going; another man wants to command the riot, and the wisest propose an orgy. If any man entered the room in his senses he would think it a Bacchanalian revel. It was in the midst of such a tumult as this that Monsieur de Trailles attempted to insinuate himself into my good graces. I had preserved my senses pretty well, for I was on my guard. As for him, though he affected to be decently drunk, he was perfectly cool, and full of his own projects. I can't say how it was done, but by the time we left Grignon's that evening, at nine o'clock, he had completely bewitched me, and I had promised to take him, the next day, to papa Gobseck. The words, honor, virtue, countess, honest woman, adored woman, misery, despair, shone, thanks to his gilded language, like magic through his talk. When I awoke the next morning, and tried to remember what I had done the day before, I had much difficulty in putting my ideas together. However, it seemed to me that the daughter of one of my clients was in danger of losing her repu-

tation and the respect and love of her husband, if she could not obtain some fifty thousand francs that morning. She had debts: losses at cards, coachmaker's bill, money lost I knew not how. My fascinating friend had assured me that she was rich enough to repair, by a few years of economy, the damage she was about to do to her fortune. Not until morning did I perceive the insistency of my new friend; and I certainly had no idea of the importance it was for papa Gobseck to make peace with this dandy. Just as I was getting out of bed Monsieur de Trailles came to see me.

“ ‘Monsieur le comte,’ I said, after the usual compliments had passed, ‘I do not see that you need my introduction in presenting yourself to van Gobseck, the most polite and harmless of all capitalists. He’ll give you the money if he has it, or, rather, if you can present him with sufficient security.’

“ ‘Monsieur,’ he replied, ‘I have no wish whatever to force you into doing me a service, even though you may have promised it.’

“ ‘Sardanapalus!’ I said to myself; ‘shall I let this man think I go back on my word?’

“ ‘I had the honor to tell you yesterday,’ he continued, ‘that I have quarrelled, most inopportunately, with papa Gobseck. Now, as there is no other money-lender in Paris who can fork out at once, and the first

of the month too, a hundred thousand francs, I begged you to make my peace with him. But let us say no more about it.'

"Monsieur de Trailles looked at me with an air that was politely insulting, and prepared to leave the room.

" 'I am ready to take you to him,' I said..

"When we reached the rue des Grès the dandy looked about him with an attention and an air of anxiety which surprised me. His face became livid, reddened and turned yellow in turn, and drops of sweat stood on his forehead as he saw the door of Gobseck's house. Just as we got out of his cabriolet, a hackney-coach entered the rue des Grès. The falcon eye of the young man enabled him, no doubt, to distinguish a woman in the depths of that vehicle. An expression of almost savage joy brightened his face; he called to a little urchin who was passing, and gave him his horse to hold. We went up at once to the money-lender.

" 'Monsieur Gobseck,' I said, 'I bring you one of my intimate friends (whom I distrust as I do the devil,' I added in his ear). 'To oblige me, I am sure you will restore him to your good graces (at the usual cost), and you will get him out of his present trouble (if you choose).'

"Monsieur de Trailles bowed to the usurer, sat

down, and assumed, as if to listen to him, a courtier-like attitude, the graceful lowliness of which would have fascinated you. But my Gobseck sat still on his chair, at the corner of his fire, motionless, impassible. He looked like the statue of Voltaire seen at night under the peristyle of the Théâtre-Français. He slightly lifted, by way of bow, the shabby cap with which he covered his head, and the small amount of yellow skull he thus exhibited completed his resemblance to that marble statue.

“‘I have no money except for my clients,’ he said.

“‘That means that you are very angry with me for going elsewhere to ruin myself?’ said the count, laughing.

“‘Ruin yourself!’ said Gobseck, in a sarcastic tone.

“‘Do you mean that a man can’t be ruined if he owns nothing? I defy you to find in all Paris a finer capital than *this*,’ cried the dandy, rising, and twirling round upon his heels.

“This buffoonery, which was partly serious, had no power to move Gobseck.

“‘Am I not the intimate friend of Ronquerolles, de Marsay, Franchessini, the two Vandenesses, Ajuda-Pinto, — in short, all the young bloods in Paris? At cards I’m the ally of a prince and an ambassador whom you know. I have my revenues in London, at

Carlsbad, Baden, Bath, Spa. Don't you think *that* the most brilliant of industries?' .

" 'Surely.'

" 'You make a sponge of me, *mordieu!* you encourage me to swell out in the great world only to squeeze me at a crisis. But all you money-lenders are sponges too, and death will squeeze you.'

" 'Possibly.'

" 'Without spendthrifts what would become of you? We are one, like body and soul.'

" 'True.'

" 'Come, shake hands, old papa Gobseck, and show your magnanimity.'

" 'You have come to me,' said Gobseck, coldly, 'because Girard, Palma, Werbrust, and Gigonnet have their bellies full of your notes, which they are offering everywhere at fifty per cent loss. Now as they probably only gave you one-half of their face value, those notes are not worth twenty-five francs on the hundred. No, I thank you! Could I, with any decency,' continued Gobseck, 'lend a single penny to a man who owes thirty thousand francs, and does n't possess a farthing? You lost ten thousand francs night before last at Baron de Nucingen's ball.'

" 'Monsieur,' replied the count, with rare impudence, looking at the old man haughtily, 'my doings are none of your business. He whose notes are not due owes nothing.'

“ ‘True.’

“ ‘My notes will be paid.’

“ ‘Possibly.’

“ ‘The question between us reduces itself, at this moment, to whether I present you sufficient security for the sum I wish to borrow.’

“ ‘Right.’

“ The noise of a carriage stopping before the door echoed through the room.

“ ‘I will now fetch something that will probably satisfy you,’ said Monsieur de Trailles, rising, and turning to leave the room.

“ ‘O my son!’ cried Gobseck, rising too, and stretching out his arms to me as soon as the young man had disappeared, ‘if he only brings me good security, you have saved my life! I should have died! Werbrust and Gigonnet meant to play me a trick. Thanks to you, I shall have a good laugh to-night at their expense.’

“ The old man’s joy had something frightful about it. It was the sole moment of expansion or feeling I ever saw in him. Rapid and fleeting as it was, that joy will never pass from my memory.

“ ‘Do me the pleasure to stay here,’ he said. ‘Though I’m well-armed and sure of my shot, like a man who has hunted tigers and boarded ships to conquer or die, I distrust that elegant scoundrel.’

"He sat down again, this time in an armchair before his desk. His face was once more calm and livid.

"'Ho! ho!' he said, suddenly turning round to me; 'you are no doubt going to see that handsome creature I once told you about. I hear an aristocratic step in the passage.'

"Sure enough, the young man now returned, leading a lady, in whom I recognized that countess whom Gobseck had once described to me, — a daughter of Père Goriot. The countess did not at first see me, for I was standing back in the recess of a window, my face to the glass. As she entered the damp and gloomy room she cast a look of fear and distrust at Maxime. She was so beautiful that in spite of her faults I pitied her. Some terrible anguish shook her heart; her proud and noble features wore a convulsive expression, scarcely restrained. That young man must by this time have become to her an evil genius. I admired Gobseck, who, four years earlier, had foreseen the fate of these two beings at the time of their first note. 'Probably,' I said to myself, 'that monster with the face of an angel rules her in all possible ways, through vanity, jealousy, pleasure, the triumphs of society.'"

"But," cried Madame de Grandlieu, interrupting Derville, "the very virtues of this woman have been weapons for him; he has made her weep tears of devo-

tion; he has roused in her soul the generosity of our sex; he has abused her tenderness, and sold to her, at a cruel price, her criminal joys."

"I confess to you," said Derville, who did not understand the signs that Madame de Grandlieu was making to him, "that I did not think of the fate of that unhappy creature, so brilliant to the eyes of the world, and so dreadful to those who could read her heart. No, I shuddered with horror as I looked at her slayer, that youth with a brow so pure, a mouth so fresh, a smile so gracious, teeth so white; a man in the semblance of an angel! They stood at this moment before a judge who examined them as an old Dominican of the sixteenth century might have watched the torturing of two Moors in the cellars of the Inquisition.

" 'Monsieur, is there any way of obtaining the value of these diamonds, reserving to myself the right to redeem them?' she said, in a trembling voice, holding out to him a casket.

" 'Yes, madame,' I replied, interposing, and coming forward.

"She looked at me, recognized me, gave a shudder, and then cast upon me that glance which says, in every country, 'Silence!'

" 'The matter you propose,' I continued, 'constitutes an act which we lawyers call sale with right of

redemption, — a transaction which consists in yielding and conveying property, either real or personal, for a given time, at the expiration of which the property can be taken back at a previously fixed price.'

"She breathed more easily. Comte Maxime frowned; he thought the usurer would give a smaller sum for the diamonds if subject to this condition. Gobseck, immovable, picked up his magnifier, and silently opened the casket. Were I to live a hundred years I could never forget the picture his face presented to our eyes. His pale cheeks colored; his eyes, in which the glitter of the stones seemed to be reflected, sparkled with unnatural fire. He rose, went to the light, held the diamonds close to his toothless mouth as if he wanted to devour them. He mumbled a few vague words, lifting, one after the other, the bracelets, necklaces, diadems, sprays,—all of which he held to the light to judge of their water, their whiteness and cutting. He took them from the casket, and he laid them back, he played with them to make their fires sparkle, seeming more of a child than an old man, — or, rather, a child and an old man combined.

"'Fine! they must have been worth three hundred thousand francs before the Revolution. What water! True diamonds of Asia! from Golconda or Visapur! Do you know their value? No, no, Gobseck is the only man in Paris who knows how to appraise them.

Under the Empire it would still have cost two hundred thousand francs to collect that set, but now —' He made a gesture of disgust, and added, 'Now diamonds are losing value every day. Brazil is flooding us with stones,—less white than those of India. Women no longer wear them, except at court. Does madame go to court?'

"While delivering this verdict he was still examining, with indescribable delight, each stone in the casket.

"'No blemish!' he kept saying, 'One blemish! Here's a flaw — Beautiful stone!'

"His pallid face was so illumined by the light of these stones, that I compared it in my own mind to those old greenish mirrors we find in provincial inns, which receive the reflection of a light without returning it, and give an appearance of apoplexy to the traveller who is bold enough to look into them.

"'Well?' said the count, striking Gobseck on the shoulder.

"The old child quivered; he laid his toys on the desk, sat down, and became once more a usurer, hard, cold, polished as a marble column.

"'How much do you want?'

"'One hundred thousand francs for three years,' replied the count. 'Can we have them?'

"'Possibly,' answered Gobseck, taking from their

mahogany box a pair of scales of inestimable worth for accuracy,—his jewel-case, as it were! He weighed the stones, valuing, at a glance, Heaven knows how! the weight of the settings. During this time the expression on the money-lender's face wavered between joy and sternness. The countess was lost in a stupor, which I noted carefully; she seemed to be measuring the depth of the precipice down which she was falling. There was still some lingering remorse in the soul of that woman; it needed, perhaps, but a single effort, a hand stretched charitably out, to save her. I would try it.

“ ‘Are these diamonds yours, madame?’ I asked, in a clear voice.

“ ‘Yes, monsieur,’ she replied, giving me a haughty glance.

“ ‘Make out that redemption-deed, meddler,’ said Gobseck to me, pointing to his seat at the desk.

“ ‘Madame is no doubt married?’ I continued.

“ She bowed her head quickly.

“ ‘I shall not make out the deed!’ I exclaimed.

“ ‘Why not?’ said Gobseck.

“ ‘Why not?’ I echoed, drawing the old man to the window, and speaking in a low voice. ‘Because, this woman being *femme couverte*, the deed of redemption would be null, and you could not claim ignorance of a fact proved by the deed itself. You would be obliged

to produce the diamonds deposited in your hands, the weight, value, or cutting of which are described in the deed —'

"Gobseck interrupted me by a nod, and then turned to the two sinners.

" 'He is right,' he said. 'The terms are changed — Eighty thousand francs down, and you leave the diamonds with me,' adding, in a muffled tone, 'possession is nine-tenths of the law —'

" 'But —' interposed the young man.

" 'Take it, or leave it,' said Gobseck, giving the casket to the countess. 'I have too many risks to run.'

" 'Madame,' I whispered in her ear, 'you would do better to throw yourself on your husband's mercy.'

"The usurer no doubt guessed my words from the movement of my lips, for he cast a severe look at me. The young man's face became livid. The hesitation of the countess was obvious. The count went closely up to her; and, though he spoke very low, I heard him say:—

" 'Farewell, my Anastasie, be happy! As for me, my troubles will be over to-morrow.'

" 'Monsieur,' cried the young woman, addressing Gobseck, 'I accept your offer.'

" 'Well, well!' replied the old man, 'it takes a good deal to bring you to terms, fair lady.'

"He drew a check for fifty thousand francs on the Bank of France, and gave it to the countess.

" 'And now,' he said, with a smile like that of Voltaire, 'I shall complete the sum with notes for thirty thousand francs, the soundness of which cannot be questioned. They are as good as gold itself. Monsieur has just said to me: *My notes will be paid.*'

"So saying, he took out and handed to the countess the notes of the young man, protested the night before to several of his brother usurers, who had, no doubt, sold them to Gobseck at a low price, as comparatively worthless. The young man uttered a sort of roar, in the midst of which could be heard the words: 'Old scoundrel!'

"Papa Gobseck did not move one muscle of his face, but he took from a box a pair of pistols, and said, coldly: —

" 'As the insulted party, I fire first.'

" 'Maxime, you owe monsieur an apology,' cried the trembling countess.

" 'I did not intend to offend you,' stammered the young man.

" 'I know that,' replied Gobseck, tranquilly; 'you merely intended not to pay your notes.'

"The countess rose, bowed, and left the room, apparently horrified. Monsieur de Trailles was forced

to follow her; but before he did so he turned and said:—

“ ‘If either of you betray one word of this, I shall have your blood, or you mine.’

“ ‘Amen!’ replied Gobseck, putting away his pistols. ‘To risk your blood, you must have some, my lad, and there’s nothing but mud in your veins.’

“ When the outer door was closed and the two carriages had driven away, Gobseck rose and began to dance about the room, crying out:—

“ ‘I have the diamonds! I have the diamonds! the fine diamonds! what diamonds! not dear! Ha! ha! ha! Werbrust and Gigonnet, you thought you’d catch old papa Gobseck! *Ego sum papa!* I’m the master of all of you! Paid in full! paid in full! What fools they’ll look to-night when I tell ’em the affair over the dominos!’

“ This gloomy joy, this ferocity of a savage, excited by the possession of a few white pebbles, made me shudder. I was speechless and stupefied.

“ ‘Ha! ha! there you are, my boy! We’ll dine together. We’ll amuse ourselves at your house, for I haven’t any home; and those eating-house fellows, with their gravies and sauces and wines, are fit to poison the devil!’

“ The expression of my face seemed to bring him back to his usual cold impassibility.

“ ‘You can’t conceive it, can you?’ he said, sitting down by the hearth, and putting a tin sauce-pan full of milk on the hob. ‘Will you breakfast with me? There may be enough for two.’

“ ‘Thank you, no,’ I replied. ‘I never breakfast till twelve o’clock.’

“At that instant hasty steps were heard in the corridor. Some one stopped before Gobseck’s door, and rapped upon it several times, with a sort of fury. The usurer looked through the peep-hole before he opened the door, and admitted a man about thirty-five years of age, who had, no doubt, seemed to him inoffensive, in spite of his evident anger. The newcomer, who was simply dressed, looked like the late Due de Richelieu. It was *the count*, whom you have often met, and who (if you will permit the remark) has the haughty bearing of the statesmen of your faubourg.

“ ‘Monsieur,’ he said to Gobseck, ‘my wife has just left this house.

“ ‘Possibly.’

“ ‘Well, monsieur, don’t you understand me?’

“ ‘I have not the honor to know your wife,’ replied the usurer. ‘Many persons have called here this morning: women, men, girls who looked like young men, and young men who looked like girls. It would be difficult for me to —’

“ ‘A truce to jesting, monsieur; I am talking of the woman who has just left this house.’

“ ‘How am I to know if she is your wife,’ said the usurer, ‘inasmuch as I have never before had the advantage of seeing you?’

“ ‘You are mistaken, Monsieur Gobseck,’ said the count, in a tone of the deepest irony. ‘We met one morning in my wife’s bedroom. You came for the money of a note signed by her,—a note for which she had not received the value.’

“ ‘It is not my affair to know whether she received its value or not,’ replied Gobseck, with a malicious glance at the count. ‘I had discounted her note for one of my brethren in business. Besides, monsieur,’ he added, not excited or hurried in speech, and slowly pouring some coffee into his pan of milk, ‘you must permit me to remark, I see no proof that you have any right to make these remonstrances in my house. I came of age in the year sixty-one of the last century.’

“ ‘Monsieur, you have just bought family diamonds which do not belong to my wife.’

“ ‘Without considering myself obliged to let you into the secrets of my business, I must tell you, Monsieur le comte, that if your diamonds have been taken by Madame la comtesse, you should have notified all jewellers by circular letter not to buy them; otherwise, she may sell them piecemeal.’

“ ‘Monsieur,’ cried the count, ‘you know my wife.’

“ ‘Do I?’

“ ‘She is, in legal phrase, *femme couverte*.’

“ ‘Possibly.’

“ ‘She has no legal right to dispose of those diamonds.’

“ ‘True.’

“ ‘Well, then, monsieur?’

“ ‘Well, monsieur, I know your wife; she is *femme couverte*, — that is, under your control; so be it, and she is under other controls as well; but — I — know nothing of — your diamonds. If Madame la comtesse signs notes of hand, she can, no doubt, do other business, — buy diamonds, receive diamonds to sell again. That often happens.’

“ ‘Adieu, monsieur,’ said the count, pale with anger; ‘there are courts of justice.’

“ ‘True.’

“ ‘Monsieur here,’ continued the count, pointing to me, ‘must have witnessed the sale.’

“ ‘Possibly.’

“ ‘The count started to leave the room. Suddenly, aware of the seriousness of the affair, I interposed between the belligerent parties.’

“ ‘Monsieur le comte,’ I said, ‘you are right, and Monsieur Gobseck is not wrong. You could not sue him without bringing your wife into court, and all the

odium of this affair would fall on her. I am a barrister, but I owe it to myself, personally, even more than to my official character, to tell you that the diamonds of which you speak were bought by Monsieur Gobseck in my presence; I think, however, that you would do wrong to contest the validity of that sale, the articles of which are never easy to recognize. In equity, you would be right; legally, you would fail. Monsieur Gobseck is too honest a man to deny that this sale has been made to his profit, especially when my conscience and my duty oblige me to declare it. But suppose you bring a suit, Monsieur le comte, the issue would be very doubtful. I advise you, therefore, to compromise with Monsieur Gobseck, who might withdraw of his own good-will, but to whom you would, in any case, be obliged to return the purchase-money. Consent to a deed of redemption in six or eight months, a year even, a period of time which will enable you to pay the sum received by Madame la comtesse, — unless, indeed, you would prefer to buy the diamonds back at once, giving security for the payment.'

"The usurer was sopping his bread in his coffee, and eating his breakfast with quiet indifference; but when I said the word compromise, he looked at me as if to say: —

" 'The scamp! how he profits by my lessons!'

"I returned his look with a glance which he understood perfectly well. The whole affair was doubtful and base; it was necessary to compromise. Gobseck could not take refuge in denial, because I should tell the truth. The count thanked me with a friendly smile. After a discussion, in which Gobseck's cleverness and greed would have put to shame the diplomacy of a congress, I drew up a deed, by which the count admitted having received from the money-lender the sum of eighty-five thousand francs, including interest, on repayment of which sum Gobseck bound himself to return the diamonds.

" 'What hopeless extravagance!' cried the husband, as he signed the deed. 'How is it possible to bridge that yawning gulf?'

" 'Monsieur,' said Gobseck, gravely, 'have you many children?'

"That question made the count quiver as if, like an able surgeon, the usurer had laid his finger suddenly on the seat of a disease. The husband did not answer.

" 'Well!' resumed Gobseck, understanding that painful silence. 'I know your history by heart. That woman is a demon whom, perhaps, you still love; I am not surprised; she moved even me. But you may wish to save your fortune, and secure it to one, or, perhaps, two of your children. Well, cast yourself

into the vortex of society, gamble, appear to lose your fortune, and come and see Gobseck frequently. The world will say that I am a Jew, a usurer, a pirate, and have ruined you. I don't care for that! If any one openly insults me I can shoot him; no one handles sword or pistol better than your humble servant; and everybody knows it. But find a friend, if you can, to whom you can make a fictitious sale of your property, — don't you call that, in your legal tongue, making a trust?' he said, turning to me.

"The count seemed entirely absorbed by his own thoughts, and he left us, saying to Gobseck:—

" 'I shall bring you the money to-morrow; have the diamonds ready for me?'

" 'He looks to me as stupid as an honest man,' said Gobseck, when the count had gone.

" 'Say, rather, as stupid as a man who loves passionately.'

" 'The count is to pay you for drawing that deed,' said the old man, as I left him.

"Some days after these scenes, which had initiated me into the terrible mysteries in the lives of fashionable women, I was surprised to see the count enter my own office early one morning.

" 'Monsieur,' he said, 'I have come to consult you on very serious interests, assuring you that I feel the most entire confidence in your character, — as I hope

to prove to you. Your conduct towards Madame de Grandlieu is above praise.'

"Thus you see, Madame la vicomtesse," said Derville, interrupting his narrative, "that I have received from you a thousandfold the value of a very simple action. I bowed respectfully, and told him I had done no more than the duty of an honest man.

"Well, monsieur,' said the count, 'I have obtained much information about the singular personage to whom you owe your practice. From all I hear I judge that Gobseck belongs to the school of cynical philosophers. What do you think of his honesty?'

"Monsieur le comte,' I replied, 'Gobseck is my benefactor — at fifteen per cent,' I added, laughing. 'But that little avarice of his does not justify me in drawing a likeness of him for the benefit of strangers.'

"Speak out, monsieur; your frankness cannot injure either Gobseck or yourself. I don't expect to find an angel in a money-lender.'

"Papa Gobseck,' I then said, 'is profoundly convinced of one principle, which rules his conduct. According to him, money is merchandise which may, in all security of conscience, be sold cheap or dear, according to circumstances. A capitalist is, in his eyes, a man who enters, by the rate of interest which he claims for his money, as partner by anticipation in all enterprises and all lucrative speculations. Apart

from these financial principles and his philosophical observations on human nature, which lead him to behave like a usurer, I am confidently persuaded that, outside of his own particular business, he is the most upright and the most scrupulous man in Paris. There are two men in that man: he is miserly and philosophical; great and petty. If I were to die, leaving children, I should make him their guardian. That, monsieur, is what experience has shown me of Gobseck. I know nothing of his past life. He may have been a pirate; he may have traversed the whole earth, trafficking in diamonds or men, women or state secrets; but I'll swear that no human soul was ever better tried or more powerfully tempered. The day on which I took him the sum which paid off a debt I had incurred to him at fifteen per cent interest, I asked him (not without some oratorical precautions) what motive had led him to make me pay such enormous interest, and why, wishing, as he did, to oblige me, his friend, he had not made the benefit complete. "My son," he replied, "I relieved you of all gratitude by giving you the right to think you owed me nothing; consequently, we are the best friends in the world." That speech, monsieur, will explain the man to you better than any possible words of mine.'

"'My decision is irrevocably made,' said the count. 'Prepare the necessary deeds to transfer my whole

property to Gobseck. I can rely on none but you, monsieur, to draw up the counter-deed, by which he declares that this sale is fictitious, and that he binds himself to place my fortune, administered as he knows how to administer it, in the hands of my eldest son when the lad attains his majority. Now, monsieur, I am compelled to make a statement to you. I dare not keep that deed in my own house. The attachment of my son to his mother makes me fear to tell him of that counter-deed. May I ask you to be its depository? In case of his death, Gobseck is to make you legatee of my property. All is thus provided for.'

"The count was silent for a few moments, and seemed much agitated.

" 'Pardon me, monsieur,' he went on, 'I suffer terribly; my health causes me the greatest anxiety. Recent troubles have shaken my vital powers cruelly, and necessitate the great step I am now taking.'

" 'Monsieur,' I replied, 'allow me, in the first place, to thank you for the confidence you have in me. But I must justify it by pointing out to you that by this action you disinherit, utterly, your — other children. They bear your name. Were they only the children of a woman once loved, now fallen, they have a right to some means, at least, of existence. I declare to you that I cannot accept the duty with which you honor me, unless their future is secured.'

"These words made the count tremble violently. A few tears came to his eyes, and he pressed my hand.

" 'I did not wholly know you till this moment,' he said; 'you have just given me both pain and pleasure. We will fix the share of those children in the counter-deed.'

"I accompanied him to the door of my office, and it seemed to me that I saw his features relax with satisfaction at the sense that he was doing an act of justice. You see, now, Camille, how young women are led into fatal gulfs. Sometimes a mere dance, an air sung to a piano, a day spent in the country, lead to terrible disasters; vanity, pride, trust in a smile, folly, giddiness, — all lead to it. Shame, Remorse, and Misery are three Furies into whose hands all women fall, infallibly, the moment they pass the limits of — "

"My poor Camille is half-dead with sleep," said the viscountess, interrupting Derville. "Go to bed, my dear; your heart does n't need such terrifying pictures to keep it pure and virtuous."

Camille de Grandlien understood her mother, and left the room.

"You went a little too far, my dear Monsieur Derville," said the viscountess. "Lawyers are not mothers of families or preachers."

"But the newspapers tell —"

"My poor Derville!" said Madame de Grandlieu, interrupting him, "I don't know you! Do you suppose that my daughter reads the newspapers? Go on," she said, after a momentary pause.

"Three days later, the deeds were executed by the count, in favor of Gobseck —"

"You can call him the Comte de Restaud, now that my daughter is not here," said the viscountess.

"So be it," said the lawyer. "Well, a long time passed after that scene, and I had not received the counter-deed, which was to have been returned to me for safe-keeping. In Paris, barristers are so hurried along by the current of affairs that they cannot give to their clients' interests any greater attention than clients demand. Nevertheless, one day when Gobseck was dining with me, I remembered to ask him if he knew why I had not heard anything more from Monsieur de Restaud.

"'There's a very good reason why,' he answered; 'that gentleman is dying. He is one of those tender souls who don't know how to kill grief, and so let grief kill them. Life is a toil, a trade, and people should take the trouble to learn it. When a man knows life, having experienced its pains, his fibre knits, and acquires a certain suppleness which enables him to command his feelings; he makes his nerves

into steel springs which bend without breaking. If his stomach is good, a man can live as long as the cedars of Lebanon, which are famous trees.'

" 'Will the count die? '

" 'Possibly. You'll have a juicy affair in that legacy.'

" I looked at my man, and said, in order to sound him, 'Explain to me why the count and I are the only two beings in whom you have taken an interest.'

" 'Because you and he are the only ones who have trusted in me without reservations,' he replied.

"Although this answer induced me to suppose that Gobseck would not take advantage of his position in case the counter-deed was lost, I resolved to go and see the count. After parting from the old man, I went to the rue du Helder, and was shown into a salon where the countess was playing with her children. When she heard my name announced, she rose hastily and came to meet me; then she sat down without a word, and pointed to an armchair near the fire. She put upon her face that impenetrable mask beneath which women of the world know so well how to hide their passions. Grievs had already faded that face; the exquisite lines, which were always its chief merit, alone remained to tell of her beauty.

" 'It is essential, madame,' I said, 'that I should see Monsieur le comte.'

“ ‘Then you would be more favored than I am,’ she said, interrupting me. ‘Monsieur de Restaud will see no one; he will scarcely allow the doctor to visit him, and he rejects all attentions, even mine. Such men are so fanciful! they are like children; they don’t know what they want.’

“ ‘Perhaps, like children, they know exactly what they want.’

“The countess colored. I was almost sorry for having made that speech, so worthy of Gobseck.

“ ‘But,’ I continued, to change the conversation, ‘Monsieur de Restaud cannot be always alone, I suppose.’

“ ‘His eldest son is with him,’ she said.

“I looked at her; but this time she did not color; she seemed to have strengthened her resolution not to give way.

“ ‘Let me say, madame, that my request is not indiscreet,’ I resumed; ‘it is founded on important interests —’ I bit my lips as I said the words, feeling, too late, that I had made a false move. The countess instantly took advantage of my heedlessness.

“ ‘My interests are not apart from those of my husband,’ she said. ‘Nothing hinders you from addressing yourself to me.’

“ ‘The affair which brings me here concerns Monsieur le comte only,’ I replied firmly.

“ ‘I will have him informed of your wish to see him.’

“The polite tone and air she assumed, as she said those words, did not deceive me. I saw plainly she would never let me reach her husband. I talked for a time on indifferent matters, in order to observe her; but, like all women who have formed a plan, she could dissimulate with that rare perfection which, in persons of your sex, Madame la vicomtesse, is, in the highest degree, treacherous. Dare I say it? I began to apprehend the worst of her, — even crime. This impression came from a glimpse into the future, revealed by her gestures, her glance, her manner, and even by the intonations of her voice. I left her —

“And now, madame,” continued Derville, after a slight pause, “I must give you a narrative of the scenes which ended this affair, adding certain circumstances which time has revealed to me, and certain details which Gobseck’s perspicacity, or my own, have enabled me to divine —

“As soon as the Comte de Restaud appeared to plunge into the pleasures of a gay life, and seemed to squander his money, scenes took place between husband and wife the secret of which was never divulged, although the count found reason to judge more unfavorably than ever of his wife’s character. He fell ill from the effects of this shock, and took to

his bed; it was then that his aversion to the countess and her two younger children showed itself. He forbade their entrance into his room, and when they attempted to elude this order, their disobedience brought on such dangerous excitement in Monsieur de Restaud that the doctor conjured the countess not to infringe her husband's orders. Madame de Restaud, who by this time had seen the landed estates, the family property, and even the house in which she lived made over, successively, to Gobseck, no doubt understood, in a measure, her husband's real intentions. Monsieur de Trailles, then rather hotly pursued by creditors, was travelling in England. He alone could have made her fully understand the secret precautions which Gobseck had suggested to the count against her. It is said that she resisted affixing her signature, as our laws require, to the sale of lands; nevertheless, the count obtained it in every instance. She appears to have thought that the count was capitalizing his fortune, and placing the total in the hands of some notary, or, possibly, in the Bank. According to her ideas, Monsieur de Restaud must possess a deed of some kind to enable her eldest son to recover a part at least of the landed estate, and this deed was probably now in the count's own custody. She therefore determined to establish a close watch upon her husband's room. Outside of

that room she reigned despotically over the household, which she now subjected to the closest watching. She herself remained all day seated in the salon adjoining her husband's bedroom, where she could hear his every word and even his movements. At night, she had a bed made up in the same room; but for most of the time she slept little. The doctor was entirely in her interests. Such devotion seemed admirable. She knew, with the shrewdness natural to treacherous minds, how to explain the repugnance Monsieur de Restaud manifested for her; and she played grief so perfectly that her conduct attained to a sort of celebrity. A few prudes were heard to admit that she redeemed her faults by her present behavior. She herself had constantly before her eyes the poverty that awaited her at the count's death should she lose her presence of mind even for a moment. Consequently, repulsed as she was from the bed of pain on which her husband lay, she drew a magic ring around it. Far from him, but near to him, deprived of her functions, but all powerful, a devoted wife apparently, she sat there, watching for death and fortune, as that insect of the fields, in the depths of the spiral mound he has laboriously thrown up, hearkens to every grain of dust that falls while awaiting his inevitable prey. The severest censors could not deny that the countess was carrying the

sentiment of motherhood to an extreme. The death of her father had been, people said, a lesson to her. Adoring her children, she had given them the best and most brilliant of educations; they were too young to understand the immoralities of her life; she had been able to attain her end, and make herself adored by them. I admit that I cannot entirely avoid a sentiment of admiration for this woman, and a feeling of compassion about which Gobseck never ceased to joke me. At this period, the countess, who had recognized, at last, the baseness of Maxime, was expiating, in tears of blood, the faults of her past life. I am sure of this. However odious were the measures which she took to obtain her husband's fortune, they were dictated by maternal affection, and the desire to repair the wrong she had done to her younger children. Each time that Ernest left his father's room, she subjected him to close inquiry on all the count had said and done. The boy lent himself willingly to his mother's wishes, which he attributed to tender feelings, and he often forestalled her questions. My visit was a flash of light to the countess, who believed she saw in me the agent of the count's vengeance; and she instantly determined not to let me see the dying man. I myself, under a strong presentiment of coming evil, was keenly desirous to obtain an interview with Monsieur de Restaud,

for I was not without anxiety about the fate of the counter-deed; if it fell into the hands of the countess, she might raise money on it, and the result would be interminable law-suits between herself and Gobseck. I knew the latter well enough to be certain he would never restore the property to the countess, and there were many elements of litigation in the construction of these deeds, the carrying out of which could only be done by me. Anxious to prevent misfortunes before it was too late, I determined to see the countess a second time.

“I have remarked, madame,” said Derville to Madame de Grandlieu, in a confidential tone, “that certain moral phenomena exist to which we do not pay sufficient attention in social life. Being by nature an observer, I have carried into the various affairs of self-interest which come into my practice, and in which passions play so vehement a part, a spirit of involuntary analysis. Now, I have always noticed, with ever-recurring surprise, that the secret ideas and intentions of two adversaries are reciprocally divined. We sometimes find, in two enemies, the same lucidity of reasoning, the same power of intellectual sight as there is between two lovers who can read each other’s souls. So, when the countess and I were once more in presence of each other, I suddenly understood the cause of her antipathy to me, although she disguised

her feelings under the most gracious politeness and amenity. I was the confidant of her husband's affairs, and it was impossible that any woman could avoid hating a man before whom she was forced to blush. On her part, she guessed that, although I was the man to whom her husband gave his confidence, he had not yet given the charge of his property into my hands. Our conversation (which I will spare you) remains in my memory as one of the most perilous struggles in which I have ever been engaged. The countess, gifted by nature with the qualities necessary for the exercise of irresistible seduction, became, in turn, supple, haughty, caressing, confidential; she even went so far as to attempt to rouse my curiosity, and even to excite a sentiment of love in order to master me; but she failed. When I took leave of her I detected, in her eyes, an expression of hate and fury which made me tremble. We parted *enemies*. She would fain have annihilated me, while I felt pity for her, — a feeling which, to certain natures, is the deepest of all insults. That feeling showed itself plainly in the last remarks I made to her. I left, as I believe, an awful terror in her soul, by assuring her that in whatever way she acted she would inevitably be ruined.

“ ‘ If I could only see Monsieur le comte,’ I said to her, ‘ the future of your children — ’

“ ‘I should be at your mercy,’ she said, interrupting me with a gesture of disgust.

“ The questions between us being declared in so frank and positive a manner, I determined to go forward in my own way, and save that family from the ruin that awaited it. Resolving to commit even legal irregularities, if they were necessary to attain my ends, I made the following preparations: First, I sued the Comte de Restaud for a sum fictitiously due to Gobseck, and obtained a judgment against him. The countess concealed this proceeding; but it gave me the legal right to affix seals to the count's room on his death, which was, of course, my object. Next, I bribed one of the servants of the house, and made him promise to notify me the moment that his master appeared to be dying, were it even in the middle of the night; I did this, in order that I might reach the house suddenly, frighten the countess by threatening to affix the seals instantly, and so get possession of the counter-deed. I heard, afterwards, that this woman was studying the Code while she listened to the moans of her dying husband. What frightful pictures might be made of the souls of those who surround some death-beds, if we could only paint ideas! And money is always the mover of the intrigues there elaborated, the plans there formed, the plots there laid! Let us now turn from these details, irksome,

indeed, though they may have enabled you to see the wretchedness of this woman, that of her husband, and the secrets of other homes under like circumstances. For the last two months, the Comte de Restaud, resigned to die, lay alone on his bed, in his own chamber. A mortal disease was slowly sapping both mind and body. A victim to those sick fancies the caprices of which appear inexplicable, he objected to the cleaning of his room, refused all personal cares, and even insisted that no one should make his bed. A sort of apathy took possession of him; the furniture was in disorder, dust and cobwebs lay thick on the delicate ornaments. Formerly choice and luxurious in his tastes, he now seemed to take pleasure in the melancholy spectacle of his room, where the chimney-piece and chairs and tables were encumbered with articles required by illness,—phials, empty or full, and nearly all dirty, soiled linen, broken plates; a warming-pan was before the fire, and a tub, still full of some mineral water. The sentiment of *destruction* was expressed in every detail of this miserable chaos. Death loomed up in things before it invaded the person. The count had a horror of daylight; the outer blinds of the windows were closed, and this enforced darkness added to the gloom of the melancholy place. The sick man was shrunken, but his eyes, in which life appeared to have taken refuge,

were still brilliant. The livid whiteness of his face had something horrible about it, increased by the extraordinary length of his hair, which he refused to have cut, so that it now hung in long, straight meshes beside his face. He bore some resemblance to the fanatical hermits of a desert. Grief had extinguished all other human feelings in this man, who was barely fifty years of age, and whom Paris had once known so brilliant and so happy. One morning, about the beginning of December, in the year 1824, he looked at his son Ernest, who was sitting at the foot of his bed, watching him sadly: —

“ ‘Are you in pain, papa?’ asked the lad.

“ ‘No,’ he said, with a frightful smile; ‘it is all *here and there*,’ — he pointed first to his head, and then pressed his fleshless fingers on his heart, with a gesture that made Ernest weep.

“ ‘Why does not Monsieur Derville come to me?’ he said to his valet, whom he thought attached to him, but who was really in the interests of the countess. ‘Maurice,’ cried the dying man, suddenly sitting up, and seeming to recover his presence of mind, ‘I have sent you seven or eight times to my lawyer, within the last fortnight; why does n’t he come? Do you think some one is tricking me? Go and get him instantly, and bring him back with you. If you don’t execute my orders, I’ll get up myself and go —’

“ ‘Madame,’ said the valet, going into the salon, ‘you have heard Monsieur le comte; what am I to do?’ ”

“ ‘Pretend to go to that lawyer, and then come back and say to Monsieur le comte that his man of business has gone a hundred miles into the country, to try an important case. You can add that he is expected back the last of the week. Sick men always deceive themselves about their state,’ she thought; ‘he will wait for the lawyer’s return.’ ”

“ The doctor had that morning told her that the count could scarcely survive the day. When, two hours later, the valet brought back this discouraging message, the count was greatly agitated.

“ ‘My God! my God!’ he repeated many times. ‘I have no hope but in thee!’ ”

“ He looked at his son for a long while, and said to him, at last, in a feeble voice: —

“ ‘Ernest, my child, you are very young, but you have a good heart, and you will surely comprehend the sacredness of a promise made to a dying man, — to a father. Do you feel capable of keeping a secret? of burying it in your own breast, so that even your mother shall not suspect it? My son, there is no one but you in this house whom I can trust. You will not betray my confidence?’ ”

“ ‘No, father.’ ”

“ ‘Then, Ernest, I shall give you, presently, a sealed package which belongs to Monsieur Derville; you must keep it in such a way that no one can know you have it; you must then manage to leave the house, and throw the package into the post-office box at the end of the street.’

“ ‘Yes, father.’

“ ‘Can I rely upon you?’

“ ‘Yes, father.’

“ ‘Then kiss me. You make my death less bitter, dear child. In six or seven years you will understand the importance of this secret, — you will then be rewarded for your faithfulness and dexterity, and you will also know, my son, how much I have loved you. Leave me now, for a moment, and watch that no one enters this room.’

“ Ernest went out, and found his mother standing in the salon.

“ ‘Ernest,’ she said, ‘come here.’

“ She sat down, and held her son between her knees, pressing him to her heart, and kissing him.

“ ‘Ernest,’ she said, ‘your father has been talking to you.’

“ ‘Yes, mamma.’

“ ‘What did he say to you?’

“ ‘I cannot repeat it, mamma.’

“ ‘Oh! my dear child,’ cried the countess, kissing

him with enthusiasm, 'how much pleasure your discretion gives me. Tell the truth, and always be faithful to your word: those are two principles you must never forget.'

" 'Oh! how noble you are, mamma; you were never false, you! — of that I am sure.'

" 'Sometimes, Ernest, I have been false. Yes, I have broken my word under circumstances before which even laws must yield. Listen, my Ernest, you are now old enough and sensible enough to see that your father repulses me, and rejects my care; this is not natural, for you know, my son, how I love him.'

" 'Yes, mamma.'

" 'My poor child,' continued the countess, weeping, 'this misfortune is the result of treacherous insinuations. Wicked people have sought to separate me from your father, in order to satisfy their own cupidity. They want to deprive us of our property and keep it themselves. If your father were well the separation now between us would cease; he would listen to me; you know how good and loving he is; he would recognize his error. But, as it is, his mind is weakened, the prejudice he has taken against me has become a fixed idea, a species of mania, — the effect of his disease. The preference your father shows for you is another proof of the derangement of his faculties. You never noticed before his illness,

that he cared less for Pauline and Georges than for you. It is a mere caprice on his part. The tenderness he now feels for you may suggest to him to give you orders to execute. If you do not wish to ruin your family, my dear boy, if you would not see your mother begging her bread like a pauper, you must tell her everything — ’

“ ‘ Ah! ah!’ cried the count, who, having opened the door, appeared to them suddenly, half naked, already as dry and fleshless as a skeleton. That hollow cry produced a terrible effect upon the countess, who remained motionless, rigid, and half stupefied. Her husband was so gaunt and pale, he looked as if issuing from a grave.

“ ‘ You have steeped my life in misery, and now you seek to embitter my death, to pervert the mind of my son, and make him a vicious man!’ cried the count, in a hoarse voice.

“ The countess flung herself at the feet of the dying man, whom these last emotions of his waning life made almost hideous, and burst into a torrent of tears.

“ ‘ Mercy! mercy!’ she cried.

“ ‘ Have you had pity for me?’ he asked. ‘ I allowed you to squander your own fortune; would you now squander mine, and ruin my son?’

“ ‘ Ah! yes, no pity for me! yes, be inflexible! but

the children! Condemn your widow to a convent, and I will obey you; I will expiate my faults by doing all you order; but let the children prosper! the children! the children!

“ ‘I have but one child,’ replied the count, stretching his fleshless arm, with a despairing gesture, to his son.

“ ‘Pardon! I repent! I repent!’ cried the countess, clasping the cold, damp feet of her husband. Sobs hindered her from speaking; only vague, incoherent words could force their way from her burning throat.

“ ‘After what you have just said to Ernest do you dare to talk of repentance?’ said the dying man, freeing his feet, and throwing over the countess in doing so. ‘You shock me,’ he added, with an indifference in which there was something awful. ‘You were a bad daughter, you have been a bad wife, you will be a bad mother.’

“The unhappy woman fainted as she lay there. The dying man returned to his bed, lay down, and lost consciousness soon after. The priests came to administer the sacraments. He died at midnight, the scene of the morning having exhausted his remaining strength. I reached the house, together with papa Gobseck, half an hour later. Thanks to the excitement that prevailed, we entered the little salon, next

to the death-chamber, unnoticed. There we found the three children in tears, between two priests, who were to pass the night with the body. Ernest came to me, and said that his mother wished to be alone, in the count's chamber.

“ ‘Do not enter,’ he said, with an exquisite expression of tone and gesture. ‘She is praying.’ ”

“Gobseck laughed, that silent laugh peculiar to him. I was far too moved by the feeling that shone on the boy's young face to share the old man's irony. When Ernest saw us going to the door, he ran to it, and called out:—

“ ‘Mamma! here are some black men looking for you.’ ”

“Gobseck lifted the child as if he were a feather, and opened the door. What a sight now met our eyes! Frightful disorder reigned in the room. Dishevelled by despair, her eyes flashing, the countess stood erect, speechless, in the midst of clothes, papers, articles of all kinds. Horrible confusion in the presence of death! Hardly had the count expired, before his wife had forced the drawers and the desk. Round her, on the carpet, lay fragments of all kinds, torn papers, portfolios broken open, — all bearing the marks of her daring hands. If, at first, her search had been in vain, something in her attitude and the sort of agitation that possessed her made me think she

had ended by discovering the mysterious papers. I turned my eyes to the bed, and, with the instinct that practice in our profession gives me, I divined what had happened. The count's body was rolled to the wall, and lay half across the bed, the nose to the mattress, disdainfully tossed aside, like the envelopes lying on the floor. His inflexible, stiffening limbs gave him an appearance grotesquely horrible. The dying man had no doubt hidden the counter-deed under his pillow, in order to preserve it from danger, while he lived. The countess, baffled in her search, must have divined her husband's thought at last; in fact, it seemed revealed by the convulsive form of his hooked fingers. The pillow was flung upon the ground; the imprint of the wife's foot was still upon it; beside it, and just before her, where she stood, I saw an envelope with many seals, bearing the count's arms. This I picked hastily up, and read a direction, showing that the contents of that envelope had been intended for me. I knew what they were! I looked fixedly at the countess, with the stern intelligence of a judge who examines a guilty person. A fire on the hearth was licking up the remains of the papers. When she saw us enter, the countess had doubtless flung the deed into it, believing (perhaps from its first formal words) that she was destroying a will that deprived her younger children of their property. A tortured conscience,

and the involuntary fear inspired by the commission of a crime, had taken from her all power of reflection. Finding herself caught almost in the act, she may have fancied she already felt the branding iron of the galleys. The woman stood there, panting, as she awaited our first words, and looking at us with haggard eyes.

“ ‘ Ah! madame,’ I said, taking from the hearth a fragment which the fire had not wholly consumed, ‘ you have ruined your younger children! These papers secured their property to them.’ ”

“ Her mouth stirred, as if she were about to have a paralytic fit.

“ ‘ Hé! hé! ’ cried Gobseck, whose exclamation had the effect produced by the pushing of a brass candlestick on a bit of marble. After a slight pause, he said to me, calmly: —

“ ‘ Do you want to make Madame la comtesse believe that I am not the sole and legitimate possessor of the property sold to me by Monsieur le comte? This house belongs to me henceforth.’ ”

“ The blow of a club applied suddenly to my head could not have caused me greater pain or more surprise. The countess observed the puzzled glance which I cast on the old man.

“ ‘ Monsieur! monsieur! ’ she said to him; but she could find no other words than those.

“ ‘Have you a deed of trust?’ I said to him.

“ ‘Possibly.’

“ ‘Do you intend to take advantage of the crime which madame has committed?’

“ ‘Precisely.’

“ ‘I left the house, leaving the countess sitting by her husband’s bedside, weeping hot tears. Gobseck followed me. When we reached the street I turned away from him; but he came to me, and gave me one of those piercing looks with which he sounded hearts, and said, with his fluty voice, in its sharpest tone:—

“ ‘Do you pretend to judge me?’

“ ‘After that I saw but little of him. He let the count’s house in Paris, and spent the summers on the Restaud estates in the country, where he played the lord, constructed farms, repaired mills, built roads, and planted trees. I met him one day in the Tuileries gardens.

“ ‘The countess is living an heroic life,’ I said. ‘She devotes herself wholly to the education of her children, whom she is bringing up admirably. The eldest is a fine fellow.’

“ ‘Possibly.’

“ ‘But,’ I said, ‘don’t you think you ought to help Ernest?’

“ ‘Help Ernest!’ he cried. ‘No! Misfortune is our greatest teacher. Misfortune will teach him the

value of money, of men, and of women, too. Let him navigate the Parisian sea! When he has learned to be a good pilot it will be soon enough to give him a ship.'

"I left him without further explanation of the meaning of those words. Though Monsieur de Restaud, to whom his mother has no doubt imparted her own repugnance to me, is far, indeed, from taking me for his counsel, I went, two weeks ago, to Gobseck, and told him of Ernest's love for Mademoiselle Camille, and urged him to make ready to accomplish his trust, inasmuch as the young count has almost reached his majority. I found the old man had been confined for a long time to his bed, suffering from a disease which was about to carry him off. He declined to answer until he was able to get up and attend to business, — unwilling, no doubt, to give up a penny while the breath of life was in him; his delay could have no other motive. Finding him very much worse than he thought himself, I stayed with him for some time, and was thus able to observe the progress of a passion which age had converted into a species of mania. In order to have no one in the house he occupied, he had become the sole tenant of it, leaving all the other apartments unoccupied. Nothing was changed in the room in which he lived. The furniture, which I had known so well for sixteen years,

seemed to have been kept under glass, so exactly the same was it. His old and faithful portress, married to an old soldier who kept the lodge while she went up to do her master's work, was still his housekeeper, and was now fulfilling the functions of a nurse. Notwithstanding his weak condition, Gobseck still received his clients and his revenues; and he had so carefully simplified his business that a few messages sent by the old soldier were sufficient to regulate his external affairs. At the time of the treaty by which France recognized the republic of Hayti, the knowledge possessed by Gobseck of the former fortunes of San Domingo and the colonists, the assigns of whom were claiming indemnity, caused him to be appointed member of the commission instituted to determine these rights, and adjust the payments due from the Haytian government. Gobseck's genius led him to establish an agency for discounting the claims of the colonists and their heirs and assigns under the names of Werbrust and Gigonnet, with whom he shared all profits without advancing any money, his knowledge of these matters constituting his share in the enterprise. This agency was like a distillery, which threw out the claims of ignorant persons, distrustful persons, or those whose rights could be contested. As member of the commission, Gobseck negotiated with the large proprietors, who, either to get their claims

valued at a high figure, or to have them speedily admitted, offered him gifts in proportion to the sums involved.

These presents constituted a sort of discount on the sums he could not lay hands on himself; moreover, this agency gave him, at a low price, the claims of petty owners, or timid owners, who preferred an immediate payment, small as the sum might be, to the chance of uncertain payments from the republic. Gobseck was therefore the insatiable bo-constrictor of this great affair. Every morning he received his tribute, and looked it over as the minister of a pacha might have done before deciding to sign a pardon. Gobseck took all things,—from the game-bag of some poor devil, and the pound of candles of a timorous soul, to the plate of the rich, and the gold snuff-boxes of speculators. No one knew what became of these presents made to the old usurer. All things went in to him, nothing came out:—

“ ‘On the word of an honest woman,’ the portress, an old acquaintance of mine, said to me, ‘I believe he swallows ’em! But that don’t make him fat, for he’s as lank as the pendulum of my clock.’ ”

“ Last Monday Gobseck sent the old soldier to fetch me.

“ ‘Make haste, Monsieur Derville,’ said the man as he entered my office; ‘the master is going to give in

his last account. He's as yellow as a lemon; and he's very impatient to see you. Death has got him; the last rattle growls in his throat.'

"When I entered the chamber of the dying man, I found him on his knees before the fireplace, where, though there was no fire, an enormous heap of ashes lay. Gobseck had crawled to it from his bed, but strength to return had failed him, also the voice with which to call for assistance.

" 'My old friend,' I said, lifting him, and helping him to regain his bed, 'you will take cold; why don't you have a fire?'

" 'I'm not cold,' he answered. 'No fire! no fire! — I'm going I don't know where, boy,' he went on, giving me his last blank, chilling look; 'but it is away from here! I've got the *carphology*,' using a term which made me see how clear and precise his intellect still was. 'I thought my room was full of living gold, and I got up to get some. To whom will mine go? I won't let the government get it. I've made a will; find it, Grotius. The *belle Hollandaise* had a daughter that I saw somewhere; I don't know where — in the rue Vivienne, one evening. I think they call her "La Torpille," — she's pretty; find her, Grotius. You are the executor of my will; take what you want; eat it; there's *pâtés de foie gras*, bags of coffee, sugar, gold spoons. Give the Odiot service to

your wife. But who's to have the diamonds? Do you care for them, boy? There's tobacco; sell it in Hamburg; it will bring half as much again. I've got *everything!* and I must leave it all! Come, come, papa Gobseck,' he said to himself, 'no weakness! be yourself.'

"He sat up in bed, his face clearly defined against the pillow like a piece of bronze; he stretched his withered arm and bony hand upon the coverlet, which he grasped as if to hold himself from going. He looked at his hearth, cold as his own metallic eye; and he died with his mind clear, presenting to his portress, the old soldier, and me, an image of those old Romans standing behind the Consuls, such as Lethière has depicted them in his painting of the 'Death of the Sons of Brutus.'

"'Has n't he grit, that old Lascar!' said the soldier, in barrack language.

"I still seemed to hear the fantastic enumeration that the dying man had made of his possessions, and my glance, which had followed his, again rested on that heap of ashes, the immense size of which suddenly struck me. I took the tongs, and when I thrust them into the mound, they struck upon a hoard of gold and silver, — no doubt the fruit of his last receipts, which his weakness had prevented him from hiding elsewhere.

“ ‘Go for the justice-of-peace,’ I said, ‘and let the seals be put on at once.’ ”

“ Moved by Gobseck's last words, and by something the portress had told me, I took the keys of the other apartments, in order to inspect them. In the first room I entered I found the explanation of words I had supposed delirious. Before my eyes were the effects of an avarice in which nought remained but that illogical instinct of hoarding which we see in provincial misers. In the room adjoining that where Gobseck lay were mouldy patties, a mass of eatables of all kinds, shell-fish, and other fish, now rotten, the various stenches of which almost asphyxiated me. Maggots and insects swarmed there. These presents, recently made, were lying among boxes of all shapes, chests of tea, bags of coffee. On the fireplace, in a silver soup tureen, were bills of lading of merchandise consigned to him at Havre: bales of cotton, hogsheads of sugar, barrels of rum, coffees, indigos, tobacco, — an absolute bazaar of colonial products! The room was crowded with articles of furniture, silver-ware; lamps, pictures, vases, books, fine engravings, without frames or rolled up, and curiosities of various descriptions. Possibly this enormous mass of property of all kinds did not come wholly as gifts; part of it may have been taken in pledge for debts unpaid. I saw jewel-cases stamped with armorial bearings,

sets of the finest damask, valuable weapons, but all without names. Opening a book, which seemed to me rather out of place, I found in it a number of thousand-franc notes. I resolved, therefore, to examine the most insignificant articles, — to search the floors, the ceilings, the cornices, the walls, and find every fragment of that gold so passionately loved by the old Dutchman, who was worthy, indeed, of Rembrandt's pencil. I have never seen, throughout my legal life, such effects of avarice and originality. When I returned to his own chamber, I found, on his desk, the reason of this progressive heaping up of riches. Under a paper-weight was a correspondence between Gobseck and the merchants to whom, no doubt, he habitually sold his presents. Now whether it was that these dealers were the victims of his astuteness, or that Gobseck wanted too high a price for his provisions and manufactured articles, it was evident that each negotiation was suspended. He had not sold the comestibles to Chevet because Chevet would only take them at a reduction of thirty per cent. Gobseck haggled for a few extra francs, and, meantime, the goods became damaged. As for the silver, he refused to pay the costs of transportation; neither would he make good the wastage on his coffees. In short, every article had given rise to squabbles which revealed in Gobseck the first symptoms of that childishness, that

incomprehensible obstinacy which old men fall into whenever a strong passion survives the vigor of their minds. I said to myself, as he had said: —

“ ‘To whom will all this wealth go?’ ”

“Thinking over the singular information he had given me about his only heiress, I saw that I should be compelled to ransack every questionable house in Paris, in order to cast this enormous fortune at the feet of a bad woman. But — what is of far more importance to us — let me now tell you, that, according to deeds drawn up in due form, Comte Ernest de Restaud will, in a few days, come into possession of a fortune which will enable him to marry Mademoiselle Camille, and also to give a sufficient dowry to his mother, and to portion his brother and sister suitably.”

“Well, dear Monsieur Derville, we will think about it,” replied Madame de Grandlieu. “Monsieur Ernest ought to be very rich to make a family like ours accept his mother. Remember that my son will one day be Duc de Grandlieu, and will unite the fortunes of the two Grandlieu houses. I wish him to have a brother-in-law to his taste.”

“But,” said the Comte de Born, “Restaud bears gules, a barre argent, with four inescutcheons or, each charged with a cross sable. It is a very old blazon.”

"True," said the viscountess. "Besides, Camille need never see her mother-in-law, who turned the *Restuta* — the motto of that blazon, brother — to a lie."

"Madame de Beauséant received Madame de Restaud," said the old uncle.

"Yes, but only at her routs," replied the viscountess.

THE
SECRETS OF THE PRINCESSE DE CADIGNAN.

THE SECRETS
OF THE
PRINCESSE DE CADIGNAN.

TO THÉOPHILE GAUTIER.

I.

THE LAST WORD OF TWO GREAT COQUETTES.

AFTER the disasters of the revolution of July, which destroyed so many aristocratic fortunes dependent on the court, Madame la Princesse de Cadignan was clever enough to attribute to political events the total ruin she had caused by her own extravagance. The prince left France with the royal family, and never returned to it, leaving the princess in Paris, protected by the fact of his absence; for their debts, which the sale of all their salable property had not been able to extinguish, could only be recovered through him. The revenues of the entailed estates had been seized. In

short, the affairs of this great family were in as bad a state as those of the elder branch of the Bourbons.

This woman, so celebrated under her first name of Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, very wisely decided to live in retirement, and to make herself, if possible, forgotten. Paris was then so carried away by the whirling current of events that the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, buried in the Princesse de Cadignan, a change of name unknown to most of the new actors brought upon the stage of society by the revolution of July, did really become a stranger in her own city.

In Paris the title of duke ranks all others, even that of prince; though, in heraldic theory, free of all sophism, titles signify nothing; there is absolute equality among gentlemen. This fine equality was formerly maintained by the House of France itself; and in our day it is so still, at least, nominally; witness the care with which the kings of France give to their sons the simple title of count. It was in virtue of this system that François I. crushed the splendid titles assumed by the pompous Charles the Fifth, by signing his answer: "François, seigneur de Vanves." Louis XI. did better still by marrying his daughter to an untitled gentleman, Pierre de Beaujeu. The feudal system was so thoroughly broken up by Louis XIV. that the title of duke became, during his reign, the supreme honor of the aristocracy, and the most coveted.

Nevertheless there are two or three families in France in which the principality, richly endowed in former times, takes precedence of the duchy. The house of Cadignan, which possesses the title of Due de Maufrigneuse for its eldest sons, is one of these exceptional families. Like the princes of the house of Rohan in earlier days, the princes of Cadignan had the right to a throne in their own domain; they could have pages and gentlemen in their service. This explanation is necessary, as much to escape foolish critics who know nothing, as to record the customs of a world which, we are told, is about to disappear, and which, evidently, so many persons are assisting to push away without knowing what it is.

The Cadignans bear: or, five lozenges sable appointed, placed fess-wise, with the word *Memini* for motto, a crown with a cap of maintenance, no supporters or mantle. In these days the great crowd of strangers flocking to Paris, and the almost universal ignorance of the science of heraldry, are beginning to bring the title of prince into fashion. There are no real princes but those possessed of principalities, to whom belongs the title of highness. The disdain shown by the French nobility for the title of prince, and the reasons which caused Louis XIV. to give supremacy to the title of duke, have prevented Frenchmen from claiming the appellation of "highness" for

the few princes who exist in France, those of Napoleon excepted. This is why the princes of Cadignan hold an inferior position, nominally, to the princes of the continent.

The members of the society called the faubourg Saint-Germain protected the princess by a respectful silence due to her name, which is one of those that all men honor, to her misfortunes, which they ceased to discuss, and to her beauty, the only thing she saved of her departed opulence. Society, of which she had once been the ornament, was thankful to her for having, as it were, taken the veil, and cloistered herself in her own home. This act of good taste was for her, more than for any other woman, an immense sacrifice. Great deeds are always so keenly felt in France that the princess gained, by her retreat, as much as she had lost in public opinion in the days of her splendor.

She now saw only one of her old friends, the Marquise d'Espard, and even to her she never went on festive occasions or to parties. The princess and the marquise visited each other in the forenoons, with a certain amount of secrecy. When the princess went to dine with her friend, the marquise closed her doors. Madame d'Espard treated the princess charmingly; she changed her box at the opera, leaving the first tier for a *baignoire* on the ground-floor, so that Madame de Cadignan could come to the theatre unseen, and

depart incognito. Few women would have been capable of a delicacy which deprived them of the pleasure of bearing in their train a fallen rival, and of publicly being called her benefactress. Thus relieved of the necessity for costly toilets, the princess could enjoy the theatre, whither she went in Madame d'Espard's carriage, which she would never have accepted openly in the daytime. No one has ever known Madame d'Espard's reasons for behaving thus to the Princesse de Cadignan; but her conduct was admirable, and for a long time included a number of little acts which, viewed singly, seem mere trifles, but taken in the mass become gigantic.

In 1832, three years had thrown a mantle of snow over the follies and adventures of the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse, and had whitened them so thoroughly that it now required a serious effort of memory to recall them. Of the queen once adored by so many courtiers, and whose follies might have given a theme to a variety of novels, there remained a woman still adorably beautiful, thirty-six years of age, but quite justified in calling herself thirty, although she was the mother of Duc Georges de Maufrigneuse, a young man of eighteen, handsome as Antinous, poor as Job, who was expected to obtain great successes, and for whom his mother desired, above all things, to find a rich wife. Perhaps this hope was the secret of the

intimacy she still kept up with the marquise, in whose salon, which was one of the first in Paris, she might eventually be able to choose among many heiresses for Georges' wife. The princess saw five years between the present moment and the period of her son's marriage, — five solitary and desolate years; for, in order to obtain such a marriage for her son, she knew that her own conduct must be marked in the corner with discretion.

The princess lived in the rue de Miromesnil, in a small house, of which she occupied the ground-floor at a moderate rent. There she made the most of the relics of her past magnificence. The elegance of the great lady was still redolent about her. She was still surrounded by beautiful things which recalled her former existence. On her chimney-piece was a fine miniature portrait of Charles X., by Madame Mirbel, beneath which were engraved the words, "Given by the King;" and, as a pendant, the portrait of MADAME, who was always her kind friend. On a table lay an album of costliest price, such as none of the bourgeois who now lord it in our industrial and fault-finding society would have dared to exhibit. This album contained portraits, about thirty in number, of her intimate friends, whom the world, first and last, had given her as lovers. The number was a calumny; but had rumor said ten, it might have been,

as her friend Madame d'Espard remarked, good, sound gossip. The portraits of Maxime de Trailles, de Marsay, Rastignac, the Marquis d'Esgrignon, General Montriveau, the Marquis de Ronquerolles and d'Ajuda-Pinto, Prince Galathionne, the young Ducs de Grandlien and de Rhétoré, and the handsome Lucien de Rubempré, had all been treated with the utmost coquetry of brush and pencil by celebrated artists. As the princess now received only two or three of these personages, she called the book, jokingly, the collection of her errors.

Misfortune had made this woman a good mother. During the fifteen years of the Restoration she had amused herself far too much to think of her son; but on taking refuge in obscurity, this illustrious egoist bethought her that the maternal sentiment, developed to its extreme, might be an absolution for her past follies in the eyes of sensible persons, who pardon everything to a good mother. She loved her son all the more because she had nothing else to love. Georges de Maufrigneuse was, moreover, one of those children who flatter the vanities of a mother; and the princess had, accordingly, made all sorts of sacrifices for him. She hired a stable and coach-house, above which he lived in a little *entresol* with three rooms looking on the street, and charmingly furnished; she had even borne several privations to keep a saddle-horse,

a cab-horse, and a little groom for his use. For herself, she had only her own maid, and as cook, a former kitchen-maid. The duke's groom had, therefore, rather a hard place. Toby, formerly tiger to the *late* Beaudenord (such was the jesting term applied by the gay world to that ruined gentleman), — Toby, who at twenty-five years of age was still considered only fourteen, was expected to groom the horses, clean the cabriolet, or the tilbury, and the harnesses, accompany his master, take care of the apartments, and be in the princess's antechamber to announce a visitor, if, by chance, she happened to receive one.

When one thinks of what the beautiful Duchesse de Maufrigneuse had been under the Restoration, — one of the queens of Paris, a dazzling queen, whose luxurious existence equalled that of the richest women of fashion in London, — there was something touching in the sight of her in that humble little abode in the rue de Miromesnil, a few steps away from her splendid mansion, which no amount of fortune had enabled her to keep, and which the hammer of speculators has since demolished. The woman who thought she was scarcely well served by thirty servants, who possessed the most beautiful reception-rooms in all Paris, and the loveliest little private apartments, and who made them the scene of such delightful fêtes, now lived in a small apartment of five rooms, — an ante-

chamber, dining-room, salon, one bed-chamber, and a dressing-room, with two women-servants only.

"Ah! she is devoted to her son," said that clever creature, Madame d'Espard, "and devoted without ostentation; she is happy. Who would ever have believed so frivolous a woman was capable of such persistent resolution! Our good archbishop has, consequently, greatly encouraged her; he is most kind to her, and has just induced the old Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne to pay her a visit."

Let us admit a truth! One must be a queen to know how to abdicate, and to descend with dignity from a lofty position which is never wholly lost. Those only who have an inner consciousness of being nothing in themselves, show regrets in falling, or struggle, murmuring, to return to a past which can never return, — a fact of which they themselves are well aware. Compelled to do without the choice exotics in the midst of which she had lived, and which set off so charmingly her whole being (for it is impossible not to compare her to a flower), the princess had wisely chosen a ground-floor apartment; there she enjoyed a pretty little garden which belonged to it, — a garden full of shrubs, and an always verdant turf, which brightened her peaceful retreat. She had about twelve thousand francs a year; but that modest income was partly made up of an annual stipend sent

her by the old Duchesse de Navarreins, paternal aunt of the young duke, and another stipend given by her mother, the Duchesse d'Uxelles, who was living on her estate in the country, where she economized as old duchesses alone know how to economize; for Harpagon is a mere novice compared to them. The princess still retained some of her past relations with the exiled royal family; and it was in her house that the marshal to whom we owe the conquest of Africa had conferences, at the time of MADAME's attempt in La Vendée, with the principal leaders of legitimist opinion, — so great was the obscurity in which the princess lived, and so little distrust did the government feel for her in her present distress.

Beholding the approach of that terrible fortieth year, the bankruptcy of love, beyond which there is so little for a woman as woman, the princess had flung herself into the kingdom of philosophy. She took to reading, she who for sixteen years had felt a cordial horror for serious things. Literature and politics are to-day what piety and devotion once were to her sex, — the last refuge of their feminine pretensions. In her late social circle it was said that Diane was writing a book. Since her transformation from a queen and beauty to a woman of intellect, the princess had contrived to make a reception in her little house a great honor which distinguished the favored person.

Sheltered by her supposed occupation, she was able to deceive one of her former adorers, de Marsay, the most influential personage of the political bourgeoisie brought to the fore in July, 1830. She received him sometimes in the evenings, and, occupied his attention while the marshal and a few legitimists were talking, in a low voice, in her bedroom, about the recovery of power, which could be attained only by a general co-operation of ideas, — the one element of success which all conspirators overlook. It was the clever vengeance of a pretty woman, who thus inveigled the prime minister, and made him act as screen for a conspiracy against his own government.

This adventure, worthy of the finest days of the Fronde, was the text of a very witty letter, in which the princess rendered to MADAME an account of the negotiations. The Duc de Maufrigneuse went to La Vendée, and was able to return secretly without being compromised, but not without taking part in MADAME's perils; the latter, however, sent him home the moment she saw that her cause was lost. Perhaps, had he remained, the eager vigilance of the young man might have foiled that treachery. However great the faults of the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse may have seemed in the eyes of the bourgeoisie, the behavior of her son on this occasion certainly effaced them in the eyes of the aristocracy. There was great nobility and gran-

deur in thus risking her only son, and the heir of an historic name. Some persons are said to intentionally cover the faults of their private life by public services, and *vice versâ*; but the Princesse de Cadignan made no such calculation. Possibly those who apparently so conduct themselves make none. Events count for much in such cases.

On one of the first fine days in the month of May, 1833, the Marquise d'Espard and the princess were turning about — one could hardly call it walking — in the single path which wound round the grass-plot in the garden, about half past two in the afternoon, just as the sun was leaving it. The rays reflected on the walls gave a warm atmosphere to the little space, which was fragrant with flowers, the gift of the marquise.

"We shall soon lose de Marsay," said the marquise; "and with him will disappear your last hope of fortune for your son. Ever since you played him that clever trick, he has returned to his affection for you."

"My son will never capitulate to the younger branch," returned the princess, "if he has to die of hunger, or I have to work with my hands to feed him. Besides, Berthe de Cinq-Cygne has no aversion to him."

"Children don't bind themselves to their parents' principles," said Madame d'Espard.

"Don't let us talk about it," said the princess. "If I can't coax over the Marquise de Cinq-Cygne, I shall marry Georges to the daughter of some iron-founder, as that little d'Esgrignon did."

"Did you love Victurnien?" asked the marquise.

"No," replied the princess, gravely, "d'Esgrignon's simplicity was really only a sort of provincial silliness, which I perceived rather too late — or, if you choose, too soon."

"And de Marsay?"

"De Marsay played with me as if I were a doll. I was so young at the time! We never love men who pretend to teach us; they rub up all our little vanities. It is three years that I have lived in solitude," she resumed, after a pause, "and this tranquillity has nothing painful to me about it. To you alone can I dare to say that I feel I am happy. I was surfeited with adoration, weary of pleasure, emotional on the surface of things, but conscious that emotion itself never reached my heart. I have found all the men whom I have known petty, paltry, superficial; none of them ever caused me a surprise; they had no innocence, no grandeur, no delicacy. I wish I could have met with one man able to inspire me with respect."

"Then are you like me, my dear?" asked the marquise; "have you never felt the emotion of love while trying to love?"

"Never," replied the princess, laying her hand on the arm of her friend.

They turned and seated themselves on a rustic bench beneath a jasmine then coming into flower. Each had uttered one of those sayings that are solemn to women who have reached their age.

"Like you," resumed the princess, "I have received more love than most women; but through all my many adventures, I have never found happiness. I committed great follies, but they had an object, and that object retreated as fast as I approached it. I feel to-day in my heart, old as it is, an innocence which has never been touched. Yes, under all my experience, lies a first love still intact, — just as I myself, in spite of all my losses and fatigues, feel young and beautiful. We may love and not be happy; we may be happy and never love; but to love and be happy, to unite those two immense human experiences, is a miracle. That miracle has not taken place for me."

"Nor for me," said Madame d'Espard.

"I own I am pursued in this retreat by a dreadful regret: I have amused myself all through life, but I have never loved."

"What an incredible secret!" cried the marquise.

"Ah! my dear," replied the princess, "such secrets we can tell to ourselves, you and I, but nobody in Paris would believe us."

"And," said the marquise, "if we were not both over thirty-six years of age, perhaps we would not tell them to each other."

"Yes; when women are young they have so many stupid conceits," replied the princess. "We are like those poor young men who play with a toothpick to pretend they have dined."

"Well, at any rate, here we are!" said Madame d'Espard, with coquettish grace, and a charming gesture of well-informed innocence; "and, it seems to me, sufficiently alive to think of taking our revenge."

"When you told me, the other day, that Béatrix had gone off with Conti, I thought of it all night long," said the princess, after a pause. "I suppose there was happiness in sacrificing her position, her future, and renouncing society forever."

"She was a little fool," said Madame d'Espard, gravely. "Mademoiselle des Touches was delighted to get rid of Conti. Béatrix never perceived how that surrender, made by a superior woman who never for a moment defended her claims, proved Conti's nothingness."

"Then you think she will be unhappy?"

"She is so now," replied Madame d'Espard. "Why did she leave her husband? What an acknowledgment of weakness!"

"Then you think that Madame de Rochefide was

not influenced by the desire to enjoy a true love in peace?" asked the princess.

"No; she was simply imitating Madame de Beau-séant and Madame de Langeais, who, be it said, between you and me, would have been, in a less vulgar period than ours, the La Vallière, the Diane de Poitiers, the Gabrielle d'Estrées of history."

"Less the king, my dear. Ah! I wish I could evoke the shades of those women, and ask them—"

"But," said the marquise, interrupting the princess, "why ask the dead? We know living women who have been happy. I have talked on this very subject a score of times with Madame de Montcornet since she married that little Émile Blondet, who makes her the happiest woman in the world; not an infidelity, not a thought that turns aside from her; they are as happy as they were the first day. These long attachments, like that of your cousin, Madame de Camps, for her Octave, have a secret, and that secret you and I don't know, my dear. The world has paid us the extreme compliment of thinking we are two rakes worthy of the court of the regent; whereas we are, in truth, as innocent as a couple of school-girls."

"I should like that sort of innocence," cried the princess, laughing; "but ours is worse, and it is very humiliating. Well, it is a mortification we offer up in expiation of our fruitless search; yes, my dear,

fruitless, for it is n't probable we shall find in our autumn season the fine flower we missed in the spring and summer."

"That's not the question," resumed the marquise, after a meditative pause. "We are both still beautiful enough to inspire love, but we could never convince any one of our innocence and virtue."

"If it were a lie, how easy to dress it up with commentaries, and serve it as some delicious fruit to be eagerly swallowed! But how is it possible to get a truth believed? Ah! the greatest of men have been mistaken there!" added the princess, with one of those meaning smiles which the pencil of Leonardo da Vinci alone has rendered.

"Fools love well, sometimes," returned the marquise.

"But in this case," said the princess, "fools wouldn't have enough credulity in their nature."

"You are right," said the marquise. "But what we ought to look for is neither a fool nor even a man of talent. To solve our problem we need a man of genius. Genius alone has the faith of childhood, the religion of love, and willingly allows us to band its eyes. Look at Canalis and the Duchesse de Chauvieu! Though we have both encountered men of genius, they were either too far removed from us or too busy, and we too absorbed, too frivolous."

"Ah! how I wish I might not leave this world with-

out knowing the happiness of true love," exclaimed the princess.

"It is nothing to inspire it," said Madame d'Espard; "the thing is to feel it. I see many women who are only the pretext for a passion without being both its cause and its effect."

"The last love I inspired was a beautiful and sacred thing," said the princess. "It had a future in it. Chance had brought me, for once in a way, the man of genius who is due to us, and yet so difficult to obtain; there are more pretty women than men of genius. But the devil interfered with the affair."

"Tell me about it, my dear; this is all news to me."

"I first noticed this beautiful passion about the middle of the winter of 1829. Every Friday, at the opera, I observed a young man, about thirty years of age, in the orchestra stalls, who evidently came there for me. He was always in the same stall, gazing at me with eyes of fire, but, seemingly, saddened by the distance between us, perhaps by the hopelessness of reaching me."

"Poor fellow! When a man loves he becomes eminently stupid," said the marquise.

"Between every act he would slip into the corridor," continued the princess, smiling at her friend's epigrammatic remark. "Once or twice, either to see me or to make me see him, he looked through the

glass sash of the box exactly opposite to mine. If I received a visit, I was certain to see him in the corridor close to my door, casting a furtive glance upon me. He had apparently learned to know the persons belonging to my circle; and he followed them when he saw them turning in the direction of my box, in order to obtain the benefit of the opening door. I also found my mysterious adorer at the Italian opera-house; there he had a stall directly opposite to my box, where he could gaze at me in naïve ecstasy — oh! it was pretty! On leaving either house I always found him planted in the lobby, motionless; he was elbowed and jostled, but he never moved. His eyes grew less brilliant if he saw me on the arm of some favorite. But not a word, not a letter, no demonstration. You must acknowledge that was in good taste. Sometimes, on getting home late at night, I found him sitting upon one of the stone posts of the *porte-cochère*. This lover of mine had very handsome eyes, a long, thick, fan-shaped beard, with a moustache and side-whiskers; nothing could be seen of his skin but his white cheek-bones, and a noble forehead; it was truly an antique head. The prince, as you know, defended the Tuileries on the river-side, during the July days. He returned to Saint-Cloud that night, when all was lost, and said to me: 'I came near being killed at four o'clock. I was

aimed at by one of the insurgents, when a young man, with a long beard, whom I have often seen at the opera, and who was leading the attack, threw up the man's gun, and saved me.' So my adorer was evidently a republican! In 1831, after I came to lodge in this house, I found him, one day, leaning with his back against the wall of it; he seemed pleased with my disasters; possibly he may have thought they drew us nearer together. But after the affair of Saint-Merri I saw him no more; he was killed there. The evening before the funeral of Général Lamarque, I had gone out on foot with my son, and my republican accompanied us, sometimes behind, sometimes in front, from the Madeleine to the Passage des Panoramas, where I was going."

"Is that all?" asked the marquise.

"Yes, all," replied the princess. "Except that on the morning Saint-Merri was taken, a *gamin* came here and insisted on seeing me. He gave me a letter, written on common paper, signed by my republican."

"Show it to me," said the marquise.

"No, my dear. Love was too great and too sacred in the heart of that man to let me violate its secrets. The letter, short and terrible, still stirs my soul when I think of it. That dead man gives me more emotions than all the living men I ever coquetted with; he constantly recurs to my mind."

"What was his name?" asked the marquise.

"Oh! a very common one: Michel Chrestien."

"You have done well to tell me," said Madame d'Espard, eagerly. "I have often heard of him. This Michel Chrestien was the intimate friend of a remarkable man you have already expressed a wish to see, — Daniel d'Arthèz, who comes to my house some two or three times a year. Chrestien, who was really killed at Saint-Merri, had no lack of friends. I have heard it said that he was one of those born statesmen to whom, like de Marsay, nothing is wanting but opportunity to become all they might be."

"Then he had better be dead," said the princess, with a melancholy air, under which she concealed her thoughts.

"Will you come to my house some evening and meet d'Arthèz?" said the marquise. "You can talk of your ghost."

"Yes, I will," replied the princess.

II.

DANIEL D'ARTHÈZ.

A FEW days after this conversation Blondet and Rastignac, who knew d'Arthèz, promised Madame d'Espard that they would bring him to dine with her. This promise might have proved rash had it not been for the name of the princess, a meeting with whom was not a matter of indifference to the great writer.

Daniel d'Arthèz, one of the rare men who, in our day, unite a noble character with great talent, had already obtained, not all the popularity his works deserve, but a respectful esteem to which souls of his own calibre could add nothing. His reputation will certainly increase; but in the eyes of connoisseurs it had already attained its full development. He is one of those authors who, sooner or later, are put in their right place, and never lose it. A poor nobleman, he had understood his epoch well enough to seek personal distinction only. He had struggled long in the Parisian arena, against the wishes of a rich uncle who, by a contradiction which vanity must explain, after leaving his nephew a prey to the utmost penury, bequeathed to the man who had reached celebrity the

fortune so pitilessly refused to the unknown writer. This sudden change in his position made no change in Daniel d'Arthèz's habits; he continued to work with a simplicity worthy of the antique past, and even assumed new toils by accepting a seat in the Chamber of Deputies, where he took his seat on the Right.

Since his accession to fame he had sometimes gone into society. One of his old friends, a now-famous physician, Horace Bianchon, persuaded him to make the acquaintance of the Baron de Rastignac, under-secretary of State, and a friend of de Marsay, the prime minister. These two political officials acquiesced, rather nobly, in the strong wish of d'Arthèz, Bianchon, and other friends of Michel Chrestien for the removal of the body of that republican to the church of Saint-Merri for the purpose of giving it funeral honors. Gratitude for a service which contrasted with the administrative rigor displayed at a time when political passions were so violent, had bound, so to speak, d'Arthèz to Rastignac. The latter and de Marsay were much too clever not to profit by that circumstance; and thus they won over other friends of Michel Chrestien, who did not share his political opinions, and who now attached themselves to the new government. One of them, Léon Giraud, appointed in the first instance master of petitions, became eventually a Councillor of State.

The whole existence of Daniel d'Arthèz is consecrated to work; he sees society only by snatches; it is to him a sort of dream. His house is a convent, where he leads the life of a Benedictine; the same sobriety of regimen, the same regularity of occupation. His friends knew that up to the present time woman had been to him no more than an always dreaded circumstance; he had observed her too much not to fear her; but by dint of studying her he had ceased to understand her,—like, in this, to those deep strategists who are always beaten on unexpected ground, where their scientific axioms are either modified or contradicted. In character he still remains a simple-hearted child, all the while proving himself an observer of the first rank. This contrast, apparently impossible, is explainable to those who know how to measure the depths which separate faculties from feelings; the former proceed from the head, the latter from the heart. A man can be a great man and a wicked one, just as he can be a fool and a devoted lover. D'Arthèz is one of those privileged beings in whom shrewdness of mind and a broad expanse of the qualities of the brain do not exclude either the strength or the grandeur of sentiments. He is, by rare privilege, equally a man of action and a man of thought. His private life is noble and generous. If he carefully avoided love, it was because he knew himself,

and felt a premonition of the empire such a passion would exercise upon him.

For several years the crushing toil by which he prepared the solid ground of his subsequent works, and the chill of poverty, were marvellous preservatives. But when ease with his inherited fortune came to him, he formed a vulgar and most incomprehensible connection with a rather handsome woman, belonging to the lower classes, without education or manners, whom he carefully concealed from every eye. Michel Chrestien attributed to men of genius the power of transforming the most massive creatures into sylphs, fools into clever women, peasants into countesses; the more accomplished a woman was, the more she lost her value in their eyes, for, according to Michel, their imagination had the less to do. In his opinion love, a mere matter of the senses to inferior beings, was to great souls the most immense of all moral creations and the most binding. To justify d'Arthèz, he instanced the example of Raffaele and the Fornarina. He might have offered himself as an instance for his theory, he who had seen an angel in the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse. This strange fancy of d'Arthèz might, however, be explained in other ways; perhaps he had despaired of meeting here below with a woman who answered to that delightful vision which all men of intellect dream of and cherish; per-

haps his heart was too sensitive, too delicate, to yield itself to a woman of society; perhaps he thought best to let nature have her way, and keep his illusions by cultivating his ideal; perhaps he had laid aside love as being incompatible with his work and the regularity of a monastic life which love would have wholly upset.

For several months past d'Arthèz had been subjected to the jests and satire of Blondet and Rastignac, who reproached him with knowing neither the world nor women. According to them, his authorship was sufficiently advanced, and his works numerous enough, to allow him a few distractions; he had a fine fortune, and here he was living like a student; he enjoyed nothing, — neither his money nor his fame; he was ignorant of the exquisite enjoyments of the noble and delicate love which well-born and well-bred women could inspire and feel; he knew nothing of the charming refinements of language, nothing of the proofs of affection incessantly given by soul and intellect, nothing of those desires ennobled by manners, nothing of the angelic forms given by refined women to the commonest things. He might, perhaps, know woman; but he knew nothing of the divinity. Why not take his rightful place in the world, and taste the delights of Parisian society?

“Why does n’t a man who bears party per bend

gules and or, a bezant and crab counterchanged," cried Rastignac, "display that ancient escutcheon of Picardy on the panels of a carriage? You have thirty thousand francs a year, and the proceeds of your pen; you have justified your motto: *ARS THESAURUSQUE VIRTUS*, that punning device our ancestors were always seeking, and yet you never appear in the Bois de Boulogne! We live in times when virtue ought to show itself."

"If you read your works to that species of stout Laforêt, whom you seem to fancy, I would forgive you," said Blondet. "But, my dear fellow, you are living on dry bread, materially speaking; in the matter of intellect you haven't even bread."

This friendly little warfare had been going on for several months between Daniel and his friends, when Madame d'Espard asked Rastignac and Blondet to induce d'Arthèz to come and dine with her, telling them that the Princesse de Cadignan had a great desire to see that celebrated man. Such curiosities are to certain women what magic lanterns are to children, — a pleasure to the eyes, but rather shallow and full of disappointments. The more sentiments a man of talent excites at a distance, the less he responds to them on nearer view; the more brilliant fancy has pictured him, the duller he will seem in reality. Consequently, disenchanted curiosity is often unjust.

Neither Blondet nor Rastignac could deceive d'Arthèz; but they told him, laughing, that they now offered him a most seductive opportunity to polish up his heart and know the supreme fascinations which love conferred on a Parisian great lady. The princess was evidently in love with him; he had nothing to fear but everything to gain by accepting the interview; it was quite impossible he could descend from the pedestal on which Madame de Cadignan had placed him. Neither Blondet nor Rastignac saw any impropriety in attributing this love to the princess; she whose past had given rise to so many anecdotes could very well stand that lesser calumny. Together they began to relate to d'Arthèz the adventures of the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse: her first affair with de Marsay; her second with d'Ajuda, whom she had, they said, distracted from his wife, thus avenging Madame de Beauséant; also her later connection with young d'Esgrignon, who had travelled with her in Italy, and had horribly compromised himself on her account; after that they told him how unhappy she had been with a certain celebrated ambassador, how happy with a Russian general, besides becoming the Egeria of two ministers of Foreign affairs, and various other anecdotes. D'Arthèz replied that he knew a great deal more than they could tell him about her through their poor friend, Michel Chrestien, who

adored her secretly for four years, and had well-nigh gone mad about her.

"I have often accompanied him," said Daniel, "to the opera. He would make me run through the streets as fast as her horses that he might see the princess through the window of her coupé."

"Well, there you have a topic all ready for you," said Blondet, smiling. "This is the very woman you need; she'll initiate you most gracefully into the mysteries of elegance; but take care! she has wasted many fortunes. The beautiful Diane is one of those spendthrifts who don't cost a penny, but for whom a man spends millions. Give yourself up to her, body and soul, if you choose; but keep your money in your hand, like the old fellow in Girodet's 'Deluge.'"

From the tenor of these remarks it was to be inferred that the princess had the depth of a precipice, the grace of a queen, the corruption of diplomatists, the mystery of a first initiation, and the dangerous qualities of a siren. The two clever men of the world, incapable of foreseeing the dénouement of their joke, succeeded in presenting Diane d'Uxelles as a consummate specimen of the Parisian woman, the cleverest of coquettes, the most enchanting mistress in the world. Right or wrong, the woman whom they thus treated so lightly was sacred to d'Arthèz; his desire to meet her needed no spur; he consented to do so at

the first word, which was all the two friends wanted of him.

Madame d'Espard went to see the princess as soon as she had received this answer.

"My dear, do you feel yourself in full beauty and coquetry?" she said. "If so, come and dine with me a few days hence, and I'll serve up d'Arthèz. Our man of genius is by nature, it seems, a savage; he fears women, and has never loved! Make your plans on that. He is all intellect, and so simple that he'll mislead you into feeling no distrust. But his penetration, which is wholly retrospective, acts later, and frustrates calculation. You may hoodwink him to-day, but to-morrow nothing can dupe him."

"Ah!" cried the princess, "if I were only thirty years old what amusement I might have with him! The one enjoyment I have lacked up to the present day is a man of intellect to fool. I have had only partners, never adversaries. Love was a mere game instead of being a battle."

"Dear princess, admit that I am very generous; for, after all, you know!—charity begins at home."

The two women looked at each other, laughing, and clasped hands in a friendly way. Assuredly they both knew each other's secrets, and this was not the first man nor the first service that one had given to the other; for sincere and lasting friendships between

women of the world need to be cemented by a few little crimes. When two friends are able to kill each other reciprocally, and see a poisoned dagger in each other's hand, they present a touching spectacle of harmony, which is never troubled, unless, by chance, one of them is careless enough to drop her weapon.

So, eight days later, a little dinner such as are given to intimates by verbal invitation only, during which the doors are closed to all other visitors, took place at Madame d'Espard's house. Five persons were invited, — Émile Blondet and Madame de Montcornet, Daniel d'Arthèz, Rastignac, and the Princesse de Cadignan. Counting the mistress of the house, there were as many men as women.

Chance never exerted itself to make wiser preparations than those which opened the way to a meeting between d'Arthèz and Madame de Cadignan. The princess is still considered one of the chief authorities on dress, which, to women, is the first of arts. On this occasion she wore a gown of blue velvet with flowing white sleeves, and a tulle *guimpe*, slightly frilled and edged with blue, covering the shoulders, and rising nearly to the throat, as we see in several of Raffaele's portraits. Her maid had dressed her hair with white heather, adroitly placed among its blond cascades, which were one of the great beauties to which she owed her celebrity.

Certainly Diane did not look to be more than twenty-five years old. Four years of solitude and repose had restored the freshness of her complexion. Besides, there are moments when the desire to please gives an increase of beauty to women. The will is not without influence on the variations of the face. If violent emotions have the power to yellow the white tones of persons of bilious and melancholy temperament, and to green lymphatic faces, shall we not grant to desire, hope, and joy, the faculty of clearing the skin, giving brilliancy to the eye, and brightening the glow of beauty with a light as jocund as that of a lovely morning? The celebrated fairness of the princess had taken on a ripeness which now made her seem more august. At this moment of her life, impressed by her many vicissitudes and by serious reflections, her noble, dreamy brow harmonized delightfully with the slow, majestic glance of her blue eyes. It was impossible for the ablest physiognomist to imagine calculation or self-will beneath that unspeakable delicacy of feature. There are faces of women which deceive knowledge, and mislead observation by their calmness and delicacy; it is necessary to examine such faces when passions speak, and that is difficult, or after they have spoken, which is no longer of any use, for then the woman is old and has ceased to dissimulate.

The princess is one of those impenetrable women; she can make herself what she pleases to be: playful, childlike, distractingly innocent; or reflective, serious, and profound enough to excite anxiety. She came to Madame d'Espard's dinner with the intention of being a gentle, simple woman, to whom life was known only through its deceptions: a woman full of soul, and calumniated, but resigned, — in short, a wounded angel.

She arrived early, so as to pose on a sofa near the fire beside Madame d'Espard, as she wished to be first seen: that is, in one of those attitudes in which science is concealed beneath an exquisite naturalness; a studied attitude, putting in relief the beautiful serpentine outline which, starting from the foot, rises gracefully to the hip, and continues with adorable curves to the shoulder, presenting, in fact, a profile of the whole body. With a subtlety which few women would have dreamed of, Diane, to the great amazement of the marquise, had brought her son with her. After a moment's reflection, Madame d'Espard pressed the princess's hand, with a look of intelligence that seemed to say: —

“I understand you! By making d'Arthèz accept all the difficulties at once you will not have to conquer them later.”

Rastignac brought d'Arthèz. The princess made

none of those compliments to the celebrated author with which vulgar persons overwhelmed him; but she treated him with a kindness full of graceful respect, which, with her, was the utmost extent of her concessions. Her manner was doubtless the same with the King of France and the royal princes. She seemed happy to see this great man, and glad that she had sought him. Persons of taste, like the princess, are especially distinguished for their manner of listening, for an affability without superciliousness, which is to politeness what practice is to virtue. When the celebrated man spoke, she took an attentive attitude, a thousand times more flattering than the best-seasoned compliments. The mutual presentation was made quietly, without emphasis, and in perfectly good taste, by the marquise.

At dinner d'Arthèz was placed beside the princess, who, far from imitating the eccentricities of diet which many affected women display, ate her dinner with a very good appetite, making it a point of honor to seem a natural woman, without strange ways or fancies. Between two courses she took advantage of the conversation becoming general to say to d'Arthèz, in a sort of aside:—

“The secret of the pleasure I take in finding myself beside you, is the desire I feel to learn something of an unfortunate friend of yours, mon-

sieur. He died for another cause than ours; but I was under the greatest obligations to him, although unable to acknowledge or thank him for them. I know that you were one of his best friends. Your mutual friendship, pure and unalterable, is a claim upon me. You will not, I am sure, think it extraordinary, that I have wished to know all you could tell me of a man so dear to you. Though I am attached to the exiled family, and bound, of course, to hold monarchical opinions, I am not among those who think it is impossible to be both republican and noble in heart. Monarchy and the republic are two forms of government which do not stifle noble sentiments."

"Michel Chrestien was an angel, madame," replied Daniel, in a voice of emotion. "I don't know among the heroes of antiquity a greater than he. Be careful not to think him one of those narrow-minded republicans who would like to restore the Convention and the amenities of the Committee of Public Safety. No, Michel dreamed of the Swiss federation applied to all Europe. Let us own, between ourselves, that *after* the glorious government of one man only, which, as I think, is particularly suited to our nation, Michel's system would lead to the suppression of war in this old world, and its reconstruction on bases other than those of conquest, which formerly feudalized it. From this point of view the republicans came

nearest to his idea. That is why he lent them his arm in July, and was killed at Saint-Merri. Though completely apart in opinion, he and I were closely bound together as friends."

"That is noble praise for both natures," said Madame de Cadignan, timidly.

"During the last four years of his life," continued Daniel, "he made to me alone a confidence of his love for you, and this confidence knitted closer than ever the already strong ties of our brotherly affection. He alone, madame, can have loved you as you ought to be loved. Many a time I have been pelted with rain as we accompanied your carriage at the pace of the horses, to keep at a parallel distance, and see you — admire you."

"Ah! monsieur," said the princess, "how can I repay such feelings!"

"Why is Michel not here!" exclaimed Daniel, in melancholy accents.

"Perhaps he would not have loved me long," said the princess, shaking her head sadly. "Republicans are more absolute in their ideas than we absolutists, whose fault is indulgence. No doubt he imagined me perfect, and society would have cruelly undeceived him. We are pursued, we women, by as many calumnies as you authors are compelled to endure in your literary life; but we, alas! cannot defend ourselves

either by our works or by our fame. The world will not believe us to be what we are, but what it thinks us to be. It would soon have hidden from his eyes the real but unknown woman that is in me, behind the false portrait of the imaginary woman which the world considers true. He would have come to think me unworthy of the noble feelings he had for me, and incapable of comprehending him."

Here the princess shook her head, swaying the beautiful blond curls, full of heather, with a touching gesture. This plaintive expression of grievous doubts and hidden sorrows is indescribable. Daniel understood them all; and he looked at the princess with keen emotion.

"And yet, the night on which I last saw him, after the revolution of July, I was on the point of giving way to the desire I felt to take his hand and press it before all the world, under the peristyle of the opera-house. But the thought came to me that such a proof of gratitude would be misinterpreted; like so many other little things done from noble motives which are called to-day the follies of Madame de Maufrigneuse, — things that I can never explain, for none but my son and God have understood me."

These words, breathed into the ear of the listener, in tones inaudible to the other guests, and with accents worthy of the cleverest actress, were calculated to

reach the heart; and they did reach that of d'Arthèz. There was no question of himself in the matter; this woman was seeking to rehabilitate herself in favor of the dead. She had been calumniated; and she evidently wanted to know if anything had tarnished her in the eyes of him who had loved her; had he died with all his illusions?

"Michel," replied d'Arthèz, "was one of those men who love absolutely, and who, if they choose ill, can suffer without renouncing the woman they have once elected."

"Was I loved thus?" she said, with an air of exalted beatitude.

"Yes, madame."

"I made his happiness?"

"For four years."

"A woman never hears of such a thing without a sentiment of proud satisfaction," she said, turning her sweet and noble face to d'Arthèz with a movement full of modest confusion.

One of the most skilful manœuvres of these actresses is to veil their manner when words are too expressive, and speak with their eyes when language is restrained. These clever discords, slipped into the music of their love, be it false or true, produce irresistible attractions.

"Is it not," she said, lowering her voice and her eyes, after feeling well assured they had produced her

effect, — “is it not fulfilling one’s destiny to have rendered a great man happy?”

“Did he not write that to you?”

“Yes; but I wanted to be sure, quite sure; for, believe me, monsieur, in putting me so high he was not mistaken.”

Women know how to give a peculiar sacredness to their words; they communicate something vibrant to them, which extends the meaning of their ideas, and gives them depth; though later their fascinated listener may not remember precisely what they said, their end has been completely attained, — which is the object of all eloquence. The princess might at that moment have been wearing the diadem of France, and her brow could not have seemed more imposing than it was beneath that crown of golden hair, braided like a coronet, and adorned with heather. She was simple and calm; nothing betrayed a sense of any necessity to appear so, nor any desire to seem grand or loving. D’Arthèz, the solitary toiler, to whom the ways of the world were unknown, whom study had wrapped in its protecting veils, was the dupe of her tones and words. He was under the spell of those exquisite manners; he admired that perfect beauty, ripened by misfortune, placid in retirement; he adored the union of so rare a mind and so noble a soul; and he longed to become himself, the heir of Michel Chrestien.

The beginning of this passion was, as in the case of almost all deep thinkers, an idea. Looking at the princess, studying the shape of her head, the arrangement of those sweet features, her figure, her hand, so finely modelled, closer than when he accompanied his friend in their wild rush through the streets, he was struck by the surprising phenomenon of the moral second-sight which a man exalted by love invariably finds within him. With what lucidity had Michel Chrestien read into that soul, that heart, illumined by the fires of love! Thus the princess acquired, in d'Arthèz's eyes, another charm; a halo of poesy surrounded her.

As the dinner proceeded, Daniel called to mind the various confidences of his friend, his despair, his hopes, the noble poems of a true sentiment sung to his ear alone, in honor of this woman. It is rare that a man passes without remorse from the position of confidant to that of rival, and d'Arthèz was free to do so without dishonor. He had suddenly, in a moment, perceived the enormous differences existing between a well-bred woman, that flower of the great world, and common women, though of the latter he did not know beyond one specimen. He was thus captured on the most accessible and sensitive sides of his soul and of his genius. Impelled by his simplicity, and by the impetuosity of his ideas, to lay immediate claim to

this woman, he found himself restrained by society, also by the barrier which the manners and, let us say the word, the majesty of the princess placed between them. The conversation, which remained upon the topic of Michel Chrestien until the dessert, was an excellent pretext for both to speak in a low voice: love, sympathy, comprehension! she could pose as a maligned and misunderstood woman; he could slip his feet into the shoes of the dead republican. Perhaps his candid mind detected itself in regretting his dead friend less. The princess, at the moment when the dessert appeared upon the table, and the guests were separated by a brilliant hedge of fruits and sweetmeats, thought best to put an end to this flow of confidences by a charming little speech, in which she delicately expressed the idea that Daniel and Michel were twin souls.

After this d'Arthèz threw himself into the general conversation with the gayety of a child, and a self-conceited air that was worthy of a schoolboy. When they left the dining-room, the princess took d'Arthèz's arm, in the simplest manner, to return to Madame d'Espard's little salon. As they crossed the grand salon she walked slowly, and when sufficiently separated from the marquise, who was on Blondet's arm, she stopped.

"I do not wish to be inaccessible to the friend of

that poor man," she said to d'Arthèz; "and though I have made it a rule to receive no visitors, you will always be welcome in my house. Do not think this a favor. A favor is only for strangers, and to my mind you and I seem old friends; I see in you the brother of Michel."

D'Arthèz could only press her arm, unable to make other reply.

After coffee was served, Diane de Cadignan wrapped herself, with coquettish motions, in a large shawl, and rose. Blondet and Rastignac were too much men of the world, and too politic to make the least remonstrance, or try to detain her; but Madame d'Espard compelled her friend to sit down again, whispering in her ear: —

"Wait till the servants have had their dinner; the carriage is not ready yet."

So saying, the marquise made a sign to the footman, who was taking away the coffee-tray, Madame de Montcornet perceived that the princess and Madame d'Espard had a word to say to each other, and she drew around her d'Arthèz, Rastignac, and Blondet, amusing them with one of those clever paradoxical attacks which Parisian women understand so thoroughly.

"Well," said the marquise to Diane, "what do you think of him?"

"He is an adorable child, just out of swaddling-clothes! This time, like all other times, it will only be a triumph without a struggle."

"Well, it is disappointing," said Madame d'Espard.
"But we might evade it."

"How?"

"Let me be your rival."

"Just as you please," replied the princess. "I've decided on my course. Genius is a condition of the brain; I don't know what the heart gets out of it; we'll talk about that later."

Hearing the last few words, which were wholly incomprehensible to her, Madame d'Espard returned to the general conversation, showing neither offence at that indifferent "As you please," nor curiosity as to the outcome of the interview. The princess stayed an hour longer, seated on the sofa near the fire, in the careless, nonchalant attitude of Guérin's Dido, listening with the attention of an absorbed mind, and looking at Daniel now and then, without disguising her admiration, which never went, however, beyond due limits. She slipped away when the carriage was announced, with a pressure of the hand to the marquise, and an inclination of the head to Madame de Montcornet.

The evening concluded without any allusion to the princess. The other guests profited by the sort of

exaltation which d'Arthèz had reached, for he put forth the treasures of his mind. In Blondet and Rastignac he certainly had two acolytes of the first quality to bring forth the delicacy of his wit and the breadth of his intellect. As for the two women; they had long been counted among the cleverest in society. This evening was like a halt in the oasis of a desert,—a rare enjoyment, and well appreciated by these four persons, habitually victimized to the endless caution entailed by the world of salons and politics. There are beings who have the privilege of passing among men like beneficent stars, whose light illumines the mind, while its rays send a glow to the heart. D'Arthèz was one of those beings. A writer who rises to his level, accustoms himself to free thought, and forgets that in society all things cannot be said; it is impossible for such a man to observe the restraint of persons who live in the world perpetually; but as his eccentricities of thought bore the mark of originality, no one felt inclined to complain. This zest, this piquancy, rare in mere talent, this youthfulness and simplicity of soul which made d'Arthèz so nobly original, gave a delightful charm to this evening. He left the house with Rastignac, who, as they drove home, asked him how he liked the princess.

“Michel did well to love her,” replied d'Arthèz; “she is, indeed, an extraordinary woman.”

"Very extraordinary," replied Rastignac, dryly. "By the tone of your voice I should judge you were in love with her already. You will be in her house within three days; and I am too old a denizen of Paris not to know what will be the upshot of that. Well, my dear Daniel, I do entreat you not to allow yourself to be drawn into any confusion of interests, so to speak. Love the princess if you feel any love for her in your heart, but keep an eye on your fortune. She has never taken or asked a penny from any man on earth, she is far too much of a d'Uxelles and a Cadignan for that; but, to my knowledge, she has not only spent her own fortune, which was very considerable, but she has made others waste millions. How? why? by what means? No one knows; she does n't know herself. I myself saw her swallow up, some thirteen years ago, the entire fortune of a charming young fellow, and that of an old notary, in twenty months."

"Thirteen years ago!" exclaimed d'Arthèz, — "why, how old is she now?"

"Did n't you see, at dinner," replied Rastignac, laughing, "her son, the Duc de Maufrigneuse. That young man is nineteen years old; nineteen and seventeen make —"

"Thirty-six!" cried the amazed author. "I gave her twenty."

"She 'll accept them," said Rastignac; "but don't be uneasy, she will always be twenty to you. You are about to enter the most fantastic of worlds. Good-night, here you are at home," said the baron, as they entered the rue de Bellefond, where d'Arthès lived in a pretty little house of his own. "We shall meet at Mademoiselle des Touches's in the course of the week."

III.

THE PRINCESS GOES TO WORK.

D'ARTHÈZ allowed love to enter his heart after the manner of my Uncle Toby, without making the slightest resistance; he proceeded by adoration without criticism, and by exclusive admiration. The princess, that noble creature, one of the most remarkable creations of our monstrous Paris, where all things are possible, good as well as evil, became—whatever vulgarity the course of time may have given to the expression—the angel of his dream. To fully understand the sudden transformation of this illustrious author, it is necessary to realize the simplicity that constant work and solitude leave in the heart; all that love—reduced to a mere need, and now repugnant, beside an ignoble woman—excites of regret and longings for diviner sentiments in the higher regions of the soul. D'Arthèz was, indeed, the child, the boy that Madame de Cadignan had recognized. An illumination something like his own had taken place in the beautiful Diane. At last she had met that superior man whom all women desire and seek, if only to make

a plaything of him, — that power which they consent to obey, if only for the pleasure of subduing it; at last she had found the grandeurs of the intellect united with the simplicity of a heart all new to love; and she saw, with untold happiness, that these merits were contained in a form that pleased her. She thought d'Arthèz handsome, and perhaps he was. Though he had reached the age of gravity (for he was now thirty-eight), he still preserved a flower of youth, due to the sober and ascetic life which he had led. Like all men of sedentary habits, and statesmen, he had acquired a certainly reasonable embonpoint. When very young, he bore some resemblance to Bonaparte; and the likeness still continued, as much as a man with black eyes and thick, dark hair could resemble a sovereign with blue eyes and scanty, chestnut hair. But whatever there once was of ardent and noble ambition in the great author's eyes had been somewhat quenched by successes. The thoughts with which that brow once teemed had flowered; the lines of the hollow face were filling out. Ease now spread its golden tints where, in youth, poverty had laid the yellow tones of the class of temperament whose forces band together to support a crushing and long-continued struggle. If you observe carefully the noble faces of ancient philosophers, you will always find those deviations from the type of a perfect human

face which show the characteristic to which each countenance owes its originality, chastened by the habit of meditation, and by the calmness necessary for intellectual labor. The most irregular features, like those of Socrates, for instance, become, after a time, expressive of an almost divine serenity.

To the noble simplicity which characterized his head, d'Arthèz added a naïve expression, the naturalness of a child, and a touching kindliness. He did not have that politeness tinged with insincerity with which, in society, the best-bred persons and the most amiable assume qualities in which they are often lacking, leaving those they have thus duped wounded and distressed. He might, indeed, fail to observe certain rules of social life, owing to his isolated mode of living; but he never shocked the sensibilities, and therefore this perfume of savagery made the peculiar affability of a man of great talent the more agreeable; such men know how to leave their superiority in their studies, and come down to the social level, lending their backs, like Henri IV., to the children's leap-frog, and their minds to fools.

If d'Arthèz did not brace himself against the spell which the princess had cast about him, neither did she herself argue the matter in her own mind, on returning home. It was settled for her. She loved with all her knowledge and all her ignorance. If she

questioned herself at all, it was to ask whether she deserved so great a happiness, and what she had done that Heaven should send her such an angel. She wanted to be worthy of that love, to perpetuate it, to make it her own forever, and to gently end her career of frivolity in the paradise she now foresaw. As for coquetting, quibbling, resisting, she never once thought of it. She was thinking of something very different! — of the grandeur of men of genius, and the certainty which her heart divined that they would never subject the woman they chose to ordinary laws.

Here begins one of those unseen comedies, played in the secret regions of the consciousness between two beings of whom one will be the dupe of the other, though it keeps on this side of wickedness; one of those dark and comic dramas to which that of *Tartuffe* is mere child's play, — dramas that do not enter the scenic domain, although they are natural, conceivable, and even justifiable by necessity; dramas which may be characterized as not vice, only the other side of it.

The princess began by sending for d'Arthèz's books, of which she had never, as yet, read a single word, although she had managed to maintain a twenty minutes' eulogium and discussion of them without a blunder. She now read them all. Then she wanted to compare these books with the best that contemporary literature had produced. By the time d'Arthèz

came to see her she was having an indigestion of mind. Expecting this visit, she had daily made a toilet of what may be called the superior order; that is, a toilet which expresses an idea, and makes it accepted by the eye without the owner of the eye knowing why or wherefore. She presented an harmonious combination of shades of gray, a sort of semi-mourning, full of graceful renunciation,—the garments of a woman who holds to life only through a few natural ties,—her child, for instance,—but who is weary of life. Those garments bore witness to an elegant disgust, not reaching, however, as far as suicide; no, she would live out her days in these earthly galleys.

She received d'Arthèz as a woman who expected him, and as if he had already been to see her a hundred times; she did him the honor to treat him like an old acquaintance, and she put him at his ease by pointing to a seat on a sofa, while she finished a note she was then writing. The conversation began in a commonplace manner: the weather, the ministry, de Marsay's illness, the hopes of the legitimists. D'Arthèz was an absolutist; the princess could not be ignorant of the opinions of a man who sat in the Chamber among the fifteen or twenty persons who represented the legitimist party; she found means to tell him how she had fooled de Marsay to the top of his bent; then, by an easy transition to the royal

family and to MADAME, and the devotion of the Prince de Cadignan to their service, she drew d'Arthèz's attention to the prince: —

“There is this to be said for him: he loved his masters, and was faithful to them. His public character consoles me for the sufferings his private life has inflicted upon me — Have you never remarked,” she went on, cleverly leaving the prince aside, “you who observe so much, that men have two natures: one for their homes, their wives, their private lives, — this is their true self; here no mask, no dissimulation; they do not give themselves the trouble to disguise a feeling; they are what they *are*, and it is often horrible! The other man is for others, for the world, for salons; the court, the sovereign, the public often see them grand, and noble, and generous, embroidered with virtues, adorned with fine language, full of admirable qualities. What a horrible jest it is! — and the world is surprised, sometimes, at the caustic smile of certain women, at their air of superiority to their husbands, and their indifference — ”

She let her hand fall along the arm of her chair, without ending her sentence, but the gesture admirably completed the speech. She saw d'Arthèz watching her flexible figure, gracefully bending in the depths of her easy-chair, noting the folds of her gown, and the pretty little ruffle which sported on her breast, — one

of those audacities of the toilet that are suited only to slender waists, — and she resumed the thread of her thoughts as if she were speaking to herself: —

“But I will say no more. You writers have ended by making ridiculous all women who think they are misunderstood, or ill-mated, and who try to make themselves dramatically interesting, — attempts which seem to me, I must say, intolerably vulgar. There are but two things for women in that plight to do, — yield, and all is over; resist, and amuse themselves; in either case they should keep silence. It is true that I neither yielded wholly, nor resisted wholly; but, perhaps, that was only the more reason why I should be silent. What folly for women to complain! If they have not proved the stronger, they have failed in sense, in tact, in capacity, and they deserve their fate. Are they not queens in France? They can play with you as they like, when they like, and as much as they like.” Here she danced her vinaigrette with an airy movement of feminine impertinence and mocking gayety. “I have often heard miserable little specimens of my sex regretting that they were women, wishing they were men; I have always regarded them with pity. If I had to choose, I should still elect to be a woman. A fine pleasure, indeed, to owe one’s triumph to force, and to all those powers which you give yourselves by the laws you make! But to see

you at our feet, saying and doing foolish things, — ah! it is an intoxicating pleasure to feel within our souls that weakness triumphs! But when we triumph, we ought to keep silence, under pain of losing our empire. Beaten, a woman's pride should gag her. The slave's silence alarms the master."

This chatter was uttered in a voice so softly sarcastic, so dainty, and with such coquettish motions of the head, that d'Arthèz, to whom this style of woman was totally unknown, sat before her exactly like a partridge charmed by a setter.

"I entreat you, madaine," he said, at last, "to tell me how it was possible that a man could make you suffer? Be assured that where, as you say, other women are common and vulgar, you can only seem distinguished; your manner of saying things would make a cook-book interesting."

"You go fast in friendship," she said, in a grave voice which made d'Arthèz extremely uneasy.

The conversation changed; the hour was late, and the poor man of genius went away contrite for having seemed curious, and for wounding the sensitive heart of that rare woman who had so strangely suffered. As for her, she had passed her life in amusing herself with men, and was another Don Juan in female attire, with this difference: she would certainly not have invited the Commander to supper, and would have got the better of any statue.

It is impossible to continue this tale without saying a word about the Prince de Cadignan, better known under the name of the Duc de Maufrigneuse; otherwise the spice of the princess's confidences would be lost, and strangers would not understand the Parisian comedy she was about to play for her man of genius.

The Duc de Maufrigneuse, like a true son of the old Prince de Cadignan, is a tall, lean man, of elegant shape, very graceful, a sayer of witty things, colonel by the grace of God, and a good soldier by accident; brave as a Pole, which means without sense or discernment, and hiding the emptiness of his mind under the jargon of good society. After the age of thirty-six he was forced to be as absolutely indifferent to the fair sex as his master Charles X., punished, like that master, for having pleased it too well. For eighteen years the idol of the faubourg Saint-Germain, he had, like other heirs of great families, led a dissipated life, spent solely on pleasure. His father, ruined by the revolution, had somewhat recovered his position on the return of the Bourbons, as governor of a royal domain, with salary and perquisites; but this uncertain fortune the old prince spent, as it came, in keeping up the traditions of a great seigneur before the revolution; so that when the law of indemnity was passed, the sums he received were all swallowed up in the luxury he displayed in his vast hôtel.

The old prince died some little time before the revolution of July, aged eighty-seven. He had ruined his wife, and had long been on bad terms with the Duc de Navarreins, who had married his daughter for a first wife, and to whom he very reluctantly rendered his accounts. The Duc de Maufrigneuse, early in life, had had relations with the Duchesse d'Uxelles. About the year 1814, when Monsieur de Maufrigneuse was forty-six years of age, the duchess, pitying his poverty, and seeing that he stood very well at court, gave him her daughter Diane, then in her seventeenth year, and possessing, in her own right, some fifty or sixty thousand francs a year, not counting her future expectations. Mademoiselle d'Uxelles thus became a duchess, and, as her mother very well knew, she enjoyed the utmost liberty. The duke, after obtaining the unexpected happiness of an heir, left his wife entirely to her own devices, and went off to amuse himself in the various garrisons of France, returning occasionally to Paris, where he made debts which his father paid. He professed the most entire conjugal indulgence, always giving the duchess a week's warning of his return; he was adored by his regiment, beloved by the Dauphin, an adroit courtier, somewhat of a gambler, and totally devoid of affectation. Having succeeded to his father's office as governor of one of the royal domains, he managed to please the two

kings, Louis XVIII. and Charles X., which proves he made the most of his nonentity; and even the liberals liked him; but his conduct and his life were covered with the finest varnish; language, noble manners, and deportment were brought by him to a state of perfection. But, as the old prince said, it was impossible for him to continue the traditions of the Cadignans, who were all well known to have ruined their wives, for the duchess was running through her property on her own account.

These particulars were so well understood in the court circles and in the faubourg Saint-Germain, that during the last five years of the Restoration they were considered ancient history, and any one who mentioned them would have been laughed at. Women never spoke of the charming duke without praising him; he was excellent, they said, to his wife; could a man be better? He had left her the entire disposal of her own property, and had always defended her on every occasion. It is true that, whether from pride, kindness, or chivalry, Monsieur de Maufrigneuse had saved the duchess under various circumstances which might have ruined other women, in spite of Diane's surroundings, and the influence of her mother and that of the Duc de Navarreins, her father-in-law, and her husband's aunt.

For several ensuing days the princess revealed her-

self to d'Arthèz as remarkable for her knowledge of literature. She discussed with perfect fearlessness the most difficult questions, thanks to her daily and nightly reading, pursued with an intrepidity worthy of the highest praise. D'Arthèz, amazed, and incapable of suspecting that Diane d'Uxelles merely repeated at night that which she read in the morning (as some writers do), regarded her as a most superior woman. These conversations, however, led away from Diane's object, and she tried to get back to the region of confidences from which d'Arthèz had prudently retired after her coquettish rebuff; but it was not as easy as she expected to bring back a man of his nature who had once been startled away.

However, after a month of literary campaigning and the finest platonic discourses, d'Arthèz grew bolder, and arrived every day at three o'clock. He retired at six, and returned at nine, to remain until midnight, or one in the morning, with the regularity of an ardent and impatient lover. The princess was always dressed with more or less studied elegance at the hour when d'Arthèz presented himself. This mutual fidelity, the care they each took of their appearance, in fact, all about them expressed sentiments that neither dared avow, for the princess discerned very plainly that the great child with whom she had to do shrank from the combat as much as she desired

it. Nevertheless d'Arthèz put into his mute declarations a respectful awe which was infinitely pleasing to her. Both felt, every day, all the more united because nothing acknowledged or definite checked the course of their ideas, as occurs between lovers when there are formal demands on one side, and sincere or coquettish refusals on the other.

Like all men younger than their actual age, d'Arthèz was a prey to those agitating irresolutions which are caused by the force of desires and the terror of displeasing,—a situation which a young woman does not comprehend when she shares it, but which the princess had too often deliberately produced not to enjoy its pleasures. In fact, Diane enjoyed these delightful juvenilities all the more keenly because she knew that she could put an end to them at any moment. She was like a great artist delighting in the vague, undecided lines of his sketch, knowing well that in a moment of inspiration he can complete the masterpiece still waiting to come to birth. Many a time, seeing d'Arthèz on the point of advancing, she enjoyed stopping him short, with an imposing air and manner. She drove back the hidden storms of that still young heart, raised them again, and stilled them with a look, holding out her hand to be kissed, or saying some trifling insignificant words in a tender voice.

These manœuvres, planned in cold blood, but

enchantingly executed, carved her image deeper and deeper on the soul of that great writer and thinker whom she revelled in making childlike, confiding, simple, and almost silly beside her. And yet she had moments of repulsion against her own act, moments in which she could not help admiring the grandeur of such simplicity. This game of choicest coquetry attached her, insensibly, to her slave. At last, however, Diane grew impatient with an Epictetus of love; and when she thought she had trained him to the utmost credulity, she set to work to tie a thicker bandage still over his eyes.

IV.

THE CONFESSION OF A PRETTY WOMAN.

ONE evening Daniel found the princess thoughtful, one elbow resting on a little table, her beautiful blond head bathed in light from the lamp. She was toying with a letter which lay on the table-cloth. When d'Arthèz had seen the paper distinctly, she folded it up, and stuck it in her belt.

"What is the matter?" asked d'Arthèz; "you seem distressed."

"I have received a letter from Monsieur de Cadignan," she replied. "However great the wrongs he has done me, I cannot help thinking of his exile — without family, without son — from his native land."

These words, said in a soulful voice, betrayed angelic sensibility. D'Arthèz was deeply moved. The curiosity of the lover became, so to speak, a psychological and literary curiosity. He wanted to know the height that woman had attained, and what were the injuries she thus forgave; he longed to know how these women of the world, taxed with frivolity, cold-heartedness, and egotism, could be such angels.

Remembering how the princess had already repulsed him when he first tried to read that celestial heart, his voice, and he himself, trembled as he took the transparent, slender hand of the beautiful Diane with its curving finger-tips, and said. —

“Are we now such friends that you will tell me what you have suffered?”

“Yes,” she said, breathing forth the syllable like the most mellifluous note that Tulou’s flute had ever sighed.

Then she fell into a reverie, and her eyes were veiled. Daniel remained in a state of anxious expectation, impressed with the solemnity of the occasion. His poetic imagination made him see, as it were, clouds slowly dispersing and disclosing to him the sanctuary where the wounded lamb was kneeling at the divine feet:

“Well?” he said, in a soft, still voice.

Diane looked at the tender petitioner; then she lowered her eyes slowly, dropping their lids with a movement of noble modesty. None but a monster would have been capable of imagining hypocrisy in the graceful undulation of the neck with which the princess again lifted her charming head, to look once more into the eager eyes of that great man.

“Can I? ought I?” she murmured, with a gesture of hesitation, gazing at d’Arthèz with a sublime expres-

sion of dreamy tenderness. "Men have so little faith in things of this kind; they think themselves so little bound to be discreet!"

"Ah! if you distrust me, why am I here?" cried d'Arthèz.

"Oh, friend!" she said, giving to the exclamation the grace of an involuntary avowal, "when a woman attaches herself for life, think you she calculates? It is not a question of refusal (how could I refuse you anything?), but the idea of what you may think of me if I speak. I would willingly confide to you the strange position in which I am at my age; but what would you think of a woman who could reveal the secret wounds of her married life? Turenne kept his word to robbers; do I not owe to my torturers the honor of a Turenne?"

"Have you passed your word to say nothing?"

"Monsieur de Cadignan did not think it necessary to bind me to secrecy — You are asking more than my soul! Tyrant! you want me to bury my honor itself in your breast," she said, casting upon d'Arthèz a look, by which she gave more value to her coming confidence than to her personal self.

"You must think me a very ordinary man, if you fear any evil, no matter what, from me," he said, with ill-concealed bitterness.

"Forgive me, friend," she replied, taking his hand

in hers caressingly, and letting her fingers wander gently over it. "I know your worth. You have related to me your whole life; it is noble, it is beautiful, it is sublime, and worthy of your name; perhaps, in return, I owe you mine. But I fear to lower myself in your eyes by relating secrets which are not wholly mine. How can you believe — you, a man of solitude and poesy — the horrors of social life? Ah! you little think when you invent your dramas that they are far surpassed by those that are played in families apparently united. You are wholly ignorant of certain gilded sorrows."

"I know all!" he cried.

"No, you know nothing."

D'Arthèz felt like a man lost on the Alps of a dark night, who sees, at the first gleams of dawn, a precipice at his feet. He looked at the princess with a bewildered air, and felt a cold chill running down his back. Diane thought for a moment that her man of genius was a weakling, but a flash from his eyes reassured her.

"You have become to me almost my judge," she said, with a desperate air. "I must speak now, in virtue of the right that all calumniated beings have to show their innocence. I have been, I am still (if a poor recluse forced by the world to renounce the world is still remembered) accused of such light con-

duct, and so many evil things, that it may be allowed me to find in one strong heart a haven from which I cannot be driven. Hitherto I have always considered self-justification an insult to innocence; and that is why I have disdained to defend myself. Besides, to whom could I appeal? Such cruel things can be confided to none but God or to one who seems to us very near Him — a priest; or another self. Well! I do know this, if my secrets are not as safe there," she said, laying her hand on d'Arthèz's heart, "as they are here" (pressing the upper end of her bosom beneath her fingers), "then you are not the grand d'Arthèz I think you — I shall have been deceived."

A tear moistened d'Arthèz's eyes, and Diane drank it in with a side look, which, however, gave no motion either to the pupils or the lids of her eyes. It was quick and neat, like the action of a cat pouncing on a mouse.

D'Arthèz, for the first time, after sixty days of protocols, ventured to take that warm and perfumed hand, and press it to his lips with a long-drawn kiss, extending from the wrist to the tip of the fingers, which made the princess augur well of literature. She thought to herself that men of genius must know how to love with more perfection than conceited fops, men of the world, diplomatists, and even soldiers, although such beings have nothing else to do. She

was a connoisseur, and knew very well that the capacity for love reveals itself chiefly in mere nothings. A woman well informed in such matters can read her future in a simple gesture; just as Cuvier could say from the fragment of a bone: 'This belonged to an animal of such or such dimensions, with or without horns, carnivorous, herbivorous, amphibious, etc., age, so many thousand years. Sure now of finding in d'Arthèz as much imagination in love as there was in his written style, she thought it wise to bring him up at once to the highest pitch of passion and belief.

She withdrew her hand hastily, with a magnificent movement full of varied emotions. If she had said in words: "Stop, or I shall die," she could not have spoken more plainly. She remained for a moment with her eyes in d'Arthèz's eyes, expressing in that one glance happiness, prudery, fear, confidence, languor, a vague longing, and virgin modesty. She was twenty years old! but remember, she had prepared for this hour of comic falsehood by the choicest art of dress; she was there in her armchair like a flower, ready to blossom at the first kiss of sunshine. True or false, she intoxicated Daniel.

If it is permissible to risk a personal opinion we must avow that it would be delightful to be thus deceived for a good long time. Certainly Talma on the

stage was often above and beyond nature, but the Princesse de Cadignan is the greatest true comedian of our day. Nothing was wanting to this woman but an attentive audience. Unfortunately, at epochs perturbed by political storms, women disappear like water-lilies which need a cloudless sky and balmy zephyrs to spread their bloom to our enraptured eyes.

The hour had come; Diane was now to entangle that great man in the inextricable meshes of a romance carefully prepared, to which he was fated to listen as the neophyte of early Christian times listened to the epistles of an apostle.

"My friend," began Diane, "my mother, who still lives at Uxelles, married me in 1814, when I was seventeen years old (you see how old I am now!) to Monsieur de Maufrigneuse, not out of affection for me, but out of regard for him. She discharged her debt to the only man she had ever loved, for the happiness she had once received from him. Oh! you need not be astonished at so horrible a conspiracy; it frequently takes place. Many women are more lovers than mothers, though the majority are more mothers than wives. The two sentiments, love and motherhood, developed as they are by our manners and customs, often struggle together in the hearts of women; one or other must succumb when they are not of equal strength; when they are, they produce some excep-

tional women, the glory of our sex. A man of your genius must surely comprehend many things that bewilder fools but are none the less true; indeed I may go further and call them justifiable through difference of characters, temperaments, attachments, situations. I, for example, at this moment, after twenty years of misfortunes, of deceptions, of calumnies endured, and weary days and hollow pleasures, is it not natural that I should incline to fall at the feet of a man who would love me sincerely and forever? And yet, the world would condemn me. But twenty years of suffering might well excuse a few brief years which may still remain to me of youth given to a sacred and real love. This will not happen. I am not so rash as to sacrifice my hopes of heaven. I have borne the burden and heat of the day, I shall finish my course and win my recompense."

"Angel!" thought d'Arthèz.

"After all, I have never blamed my mother; she knew little of me. Mothers who lead a life like that of the Duchesse d'Uxelles keep their children at a distance. I saw and knew nothing of the world until my marriage. You can judge of my innocence! I knew nothing; I was incapable of understanding the causes of my marriage. I had a fine fortune; sixty thousand francs a year in forests, which the Revolution overlooked (or had not been able to sell) in the Nivernais, with the noble château of d'Anzy. Mon-

sieur de Maufrigneuse was steeped in debt. Later I learned what it was to have debts, but then I was too utterly ignorant of life to suspect my position; the money saved out of my fortune went to pacify my husband's creditors. Monsieur de Maufrigneuse was forty-eight years of age when I married him; but those years were like military campaigns, they ought to count for twice what they were. Ah! what a life I led for ten years! If any one had known the sufferings of this poor, calumniated little woman! To be watched by a mother jealous of her daughter! Heavens! You who make dramas, you will never invent anything as direful as that. Ordinarily, according to the little that I know of literature, a drama is a suite of actions, speeches, movements which hurry to a catastrophe; but what I speak of was a catastrophe in action. It was an avalanche fallen in the morning and falling again at night only to fall again the next day. I am cold now as I speak to you of that cavern without an opening, cold, sombre, in which I lived. I, poor little thing that I was! brought up in a convent like a mystic rose, knowing nothing of marriage, developing late, I was happy at first; I enjoyed the goodwill and harmony of our family. The birth of my poor boy, who is all me — you must have been struck by the likeness? my hair, my eyes, the shape of my face, my mouth,

my smile, my teeth! — well, his birth was a relief to me; my thoughts were diverted by the first joys of maternity from my husband, who gave me no pleasure and did nothing for me that was kind or amiable; those joys were all the keener because I knew no others. It had been so often rung into my ears that a mother should respect herself. Besides, a young girl loves to play the mother. I was so proud of my flower — for Georges was beautiful, a miracle, I thought! I saw and thought of nothing but my son, I lived with my son. I never let his nurse dress or undress him. Such cares, so wearing to mothers who have a regiment of children, were all my pleasure. But after three or four years, as I was not an actual fool, light came to my eyes in spite of the pains taken to blindfold me. Can you see me at that awakening, in 1819? The drama of ‘The Brothers at enmity’ is a rose-water tragedy beside that of a mother and daughter placed as we then were. But I braved them all, my mother, my husband, the world, by public coquetries which society talked of, — and heaven knows how it talked! You can see, my friend, how the men with whom I was accused of folly were to me the dagger with which to stab my enemies. Thinking only of my vengeance, I did not see or feel the wounds I was inflicting on myself. Innocent as a child, I was thought a wicked woman, the worst of

women, and I knew nothing of it! The world is very foolish, very blind, very ignorant; it can penetrate no secrets but those which amuse it and serve its malice: noble things, great things, it puts its hand before its eyes to avoid seeing. But, as I look back, it seems to me that I had an attitude and aspect of indignant innocence, with movements of pride, which a great painter would have recognized. I must have enlivened many a ball with my tempests of anger and disdain. Lost poesy! such sublime poems are only made in the glowing indignation which seizes us at twenty. Later, we are wrathful no longer, we are too weary, vice no longer amazes us, we are cowards, we fear. But then—oh! I kept a great pace! For all that I played the silliest personage in the world; I was charged with crimes by which I never benefited. But I had such pleasure in compromising myself. That was my revenge! Ah! I have played many childish tricks! I went to Italy with a thoughtless youth, whom I crushed when he spoke to me of love, but later, when I heard that he was compromised on my account (he had committed a forgery to get money) I rushed to save him. My mother and husband kept me almost without means; but, this time, I went to the king. Louis XVIII., that man without a heart, was touched; he gave me a hundred thousand francs from his privy purse. The Marquis

d'Esgrignon — you must have seen him in society for he ended by making a rich marriage — was saved from the abyss into which he had plunged for my sake. That adventure, caused by my own folly, led me to reflect. I saw that I myself was the first victim of my vengeance. My mother, who knew I was too proud, too d'Uxelles, to conduct myself really ill, began to see the harm that she had done me and was frightened by it. She was then fifty-two years of age; she left Paris and went to live at Uxelles. There she expiates her wrong-doing by a life of devotion and expresses the utmost affection for me. After her departure I was face to face, alone, with Monsieur de Maufrigneuse. Oh! my friend, you men can never know what an old man of gallantry can be. What a home is that of a man accustomed to the adulation of women of the world, when he finds neither incense nor censer in his own house! dead to all! and yet, perhaps for that very reason, jealous. I wished — when Monsieur de Maufrigneuse was wholly mine — I wished to be a good wife, but I found myself repulsed with the harshness of a soured spirit by a man who treated me like a child and took pleasure in humiliating my self-respect at every turn, in crushing me under the scorn of his experience, and in convicting me of total ignorance. He wounded me on all occasions. He did everything to make me detest him

and to give me the right to betray him; but I was still the dupe of my own hope and of my desire to do right through several years. Shall I tell you the cruel saying that drove me to further follies? 'The Duchesse de Maufrigneuse has gone back to her husband,' said the world. 'Bah! it is always a triumph to bring the dead to life; it is all she can now do,' replied my best friend, a relation, she, at whose house I met you —"

"Madame d'Espard!" cried Daniel, with a gesture of horror.

"Oh! I have forgiven her. Besides, it was very witty; and I have myself made just as cruel epigrams on other poor women as innocent as myself."

D'Arthèz again kissed the hand of that saintly woman who, having hacked her mother in pieces, and turned the Prince de Cadignan into an Othello, now proceeded to accuse herself in order to appear in the eyes of that innocent great man as immaculate as the silliest or the wisest of women desire to seem at all costs to their lovers.

"You will readily understand, my friend, that I returned to society for the purpose of excitement and I may say of notoriety. I felt that I must conquer my independence. I led a life of dissipation. To divert my mind, to forget my real life in fictitious enjoyments I was gay, I shone, I gave fêtes, I played

the princess, and I ran in debt. At home I could forget myself in the sleep of weariness, able to rise the next day gay, and frivolous for the world; but in that sad struggle to escape my real life I wasted my fortune. The revolution of 1830 came; it came at the very moment when I had met, at the end of that Arabian Nights' life, a pure and sacred love which (I desire to be honest) I had longed to know. Was it not natural in a woman whose heart, repressed by many causes and accidents, was awakening at an age when a woman feels herself cheated if she has never known, like the women she sees about her, a happy love? Ah! why was Michel Chrestien so respectful? Why did he not seek to meet me? There again was another mockery! But what of that? in falling, I have lost everything; I have no illusions left; I had tasted of all things except the one fruit for which I have no longer teeth. Yes, I found myself disenchanted with the world at the very moment when I was forced to leave it. Providential, was it not? like all those strange insensibilities which prepare us for death" (she made a gesture full of pious unction). "All things served me then," she continued; "the disasters of the monarchy and its ruin helped me to bury myself. My son consoles me for much. Maternal love takes the place of all frustrated feelings. The world is surprised at my retirement, but to me it

has brought peace. Ah! if you knew how happy the poor creature before you is in this little place. In sacrificing all to my son I forget to think of joys of which I am and ever must be ignorant. Yes, hope has flown, I now fear everything; no doubt I should repulse the truest sentiment, the purest and most veritable love, in memory of the deceptions and the miseries of my life. It is all horrible, is it not? and yet, what I have told you is the history of many women."

The last few words were said in a tone of easy pleasantry which recalled the presence of the woman of the world. D'Arthèz was dumbfounded. In his eyes convicts sent to the galleys for murder, or aggravated robbery, or for putting a wrong name to checks, were saints compared to the men and women of society. This atrocious elegy, forged in the arsenal of lies, and steeped in the waters of the Parisian Styx, had been poured into his ears with the inimitable accent of truth. The grave author contemplated for a moment that adorable woman lying back in her easy-chair, her two hands pendant from its arms like dewdrops from a rose-leaf, overcome by her own revelation, living over again the sorrows of her life as she told them — in short an angel of melancholy.

"And judge," she cried, suddenly lifting herself with a spring and raising her hand, while lightning flashed from eyes where twenty chaste years shone —

“judge of the impression the love of a man like Michel must have made upon me. But by some irony of fate — or was it the hand of God? — well, he died; died in saying the life of, whom do you suppose? of Monsieur de Cadignan. Are you now surprised to find me thoughtful?”

This was the last drop; poor d'Arthèz could bear no more. He fell upon his knees, and laid his head on Diane's hand, weeping soft tears such as the angels shed, — if angels weep. As Daniel was in that bent posture, Madame de Cadignan could safely let a malicious smile of triumph flicker on her lips, a smile such as the monkeys wear after playing a sly trick — if monkeys smile.

“Ah! I have him,” thought she; and, indeed, she had him fast.

“But you are —” he said, raising his fine head and looking at her with eyes of love.

“Virgin and martyr,” she replied, smiling at the commonness of that hackneyed expression, but giving it a freshness of meaning by her smile, so full of painful gayety. “If I laugh,” she continued, “it is that I am thinking of that princess whom the world thinks it knows, that Duchesse de Maufrigneuse to whom it gives as lovers de Marsay, that infamous de Trailles (a political cutthroat), and that little fool of a d'Esgrignon, and Rastignac, Rubempré, ambassa-

dors, ministers, Russian generals, heaven knows who! all Europe! They have gossiped about that album which I ordered made, believing that those who admired me were my friends. Ah! it is frightful! I wonder that I allow a man at my feet! Despise them all, *that* should be my religion."

She rose and went to the window with a gait and bearing magnificent in *motifs*.

D'Arthèz remained on the low seat to which he had returned not daring to follow the princess; but he looked at her; he heard her blowing her nose. Was there ever a princess who blew her nose? but Diane attempted the impossible to convey an idea of her sensibility. D'Arthèz believed his angel was in tears; he rushed to her side, took her round the waist, and pressed her to his heart.

"No, no, leave me!" she murmured in a feeble voice. "I have too many doubts to be good for anything. To reconcile me with life is a task beyond the powers of any man."

"Diane! I will love you for your whole lost life."

"No; don't speak to me thus," she answered. "At this moment I tremble, I am ashamed as though I had committed the greatest sins."

She was now entirely restored to the innocence of little girls, and yet her bearing was august, grand, noble as that of a queen. It is impossible to describe the effect of these manœuvres, so clever that they

acted like the purest truth on a soul as fresh and honest as that of d'Arthèz. The great author remained dumb with admiration, passive beside her in the recess of that window awaiting a word, while the princess awaited a kiss; but she was far too sacred to him for that. Feeling cold, the princess returned to her easy-chair; her feet were frozen.

"It will take a long time," she said to herself, looking at Daniel's noble brow and head.

"Is this a woman?" thought that profound observer of human nature. "How ought I to treat her?"

Until two o'clock in the morning they spent their time in saying to each other the silly things that women of genius, like the princess, know how to make adorable. Diane pretended to be too worn, too old, too faded; D'Arthèz proved to her (facts of which she was well convinced) that her skin was the most delicate, the softest to the touch, the whitest to the eye, the most fragrant; she was young and in her bloom, how could she think otherwise? Thus they disputed, beauty by beauty, detail by detail with many: "Oh! do you think so?" — "You are beside yourself!" — "It is hope, it is fancy!" — "You will soon see me as I am. — I am almost forty years of age. Can a man love so old a woman?"

D'Arthèz responded with impetuous and school-boy eloquence, larded with exaggerated epithets. When the princess heard this wise and witty writer talking

the nonsense of an amorous sub-lieutenant she listened with an absorbed air and much sensibility; but she laughed in her sleeve.

When d'Arthèz was in the street, he asked himself whether he might not have been rather less respectful. He went over in memory those strange confidences — which have, naturally, been much abridged here, for they needed a volume to convey their mellifluous abundance and the graces which accompanied them. The retrospective perspicacity of this man, so natural, so profound, was baffled by the candor of that tale and its poignancy, and by the tones of the princess.

"It is true," he said to himself, being unable to sleep, "there are such dramas as that in society. Society covers great horrors with the flowers of its elegance, the embroidery of its gossip, the wit of its lies. We writers invent no more than the truth. Poor Diane! Michel had penetrated that enigma; he said that beneath her covering of ice there lay volcanoes! Bianchon and Rastignac were right; when a man can join the grandeurs of the ideal and the enjoyments of human passion in loving a woman of perfect manners, of intellect, of delicacy, it must be happiness beyond words."

So thinking, he sounded the love that was in him and found it infinite.

V.

A TRIAL OF FAITH.

THE next day, about two in the afternoon, Madame d'Espard, who had seen and heard nothing of the princess for more than a month, went to see her under the impulse of extreme curiosity. Nothing was ever more amusing of its kind than the conversation of these two crafty adders during the first half-hour of this visit.

Diane d'Uxelles cautiously avoided, as she would the wearing of a yellow gown, all mention of d'Arthéz. The marquise circled round and round that topic like a Bedouin round a caravan. Diane amused herself; the marquise fumed. Diane waited; she intended to utilize her friend and use her in the chase. Of these two women, both so celebrated in the social world, one was far stronger than the other. The princess rose by a head above the marquise, and the marquise was inwardly conscious of that superiority. In this, perhaps, lay the secret of their intimacy. The weaker of the two crouched low in her false attachment, watching for the hour, long awaited by feeble beings,

of springing at the throat of the stronger and leaving the mark of a joyful bite. Diane saw clear; but the world was the dupe of the wily caresses of the two friends.

The instant that the princess perceived a direct question on the lips of her friend, she said:—

“Ah! dearest, I owe you a most complete, immense, infinite, celestial happiness.”

“What can you mean?”

“Have you forgotten what we ruminated three months ago in the little garden, sitting on a bench in the sun, under the jasmine? Ah! there are none but men of genius who know how to love! I apply to my grand Daniel d’Arthèz the Duke of Alba’s saying to Catherine de’ Medici: ‘The head of a single salmon is worth all the frogs in the world.’”

“I am not surprised that I no longer see you,” said Madame d’Espard.

“Promise me, if you meet him, not to say to him one word about me, my angel,” said the princess, taking her friend’s hand. “I am happy, oh! happy beyond all expression; but you know that in society a word, a mere jest can do such harm. One speech can kill, for they put such venom into a single sentence! Ah! if you knew how I long that you might meet with a love like this! Yes, it is a sweet, a precious triumph for women like ourselves to end our woman’s life in

this way; to rest in an ardent, pure, devoted, complete and absolute love; above all, when we have sought it long."

"Why do you ask me to be faithful to my dearest friend?" said Madame d'Espard. "Do you think me capable of playing you some villanous trick?"

"When a woman possesses such a treasure the fear of losing it is so strong that it naturally inspires a feeling of terror. I am absurd, I know; forgive me, dear."

A few moments later the marquise departed; as she watched her go the princess said to herself:—

"How she will pluck me! But to save her the trouble of trying to get Daniel away from here I'll send him to her."

At three o'clock, or a few moments after, d'Arthèz arrived. In the midst of some interesting topic on which he was discoursing eloquently, the princess suddenly cut him short by laying her hand on his arm.

"Pardon me, my dear friend," she said, interrupting him, "but I fear I may forget a thing which seems a mere trifle but may be of great importance. You have not set foot in Madame d'Espard's salon since the ever-blessed day when I met you there. Pray go at once; not for your sake, nor by way of politeness, but for me. You may already have made her an enemy

of mine, if by chance she has discovered that since her dinner you have scarcely left my house. Besides, my friend, I don't like to see you dropping your connection with society, and neglecting your occupations and your work. I should again be strangely calumniated. What would the world say? That I held you in leading-strings, absorbed you, feared comparisons, and clung to my conquest knowing it to be my last! Who will know that you are my friend, my only friend? If you love me indeed, as you say you love me, you will make the world believe that we are purely and simply brother and sister — Go on with what you were saying."

In his armor of tenderness, riveted by the knowledge of so many splendid virtues, d'Arthèz obeyed this behest on the following day and went to see Madame d'Espard, who received him with charming coquetry. The marquise took very good care not to say a single word to him about the princess, but she asked him to dinner on a coming day.

On this occasion D'Arthèz found a numerous company. The marquise had invited Rastignac, Blondet, the Marquis d'Ajuda-Pinto, Maxime de Trailles, the Marquis d'Esgrignon, the two brothers Vandenesse, du Tillet, one of the richest bankers in Paris, the Baron de Nucingen, Raoul Nathan, Lady Dudley, two very treacherous secretaries of embassies and the Chevalier

d'Espard, the williest personage in this assemblage and the chief instigator of his sister-in-law's policy.

When dinner was well under way, Maxime de Trailles turned to d'Arthèz and said smiling: —

"You see a great deal, don't you, of the Princesse de Cadignan?"

To this question d'Arthèz responded by curtly nodding his head. Maxime de Trailles was a *bravo* of the social order, without faith or law, capable of everything, ruining the women who trusted him, compelling them to pawn their diamonds to give him money, but covering this conduct with a brilliant varnish; a man of charming manners and satanic mind. He inspired all who knew him with equal contempt and fear; but as no one was bold enough to show him any sentiments but those of the utmost courtesy he saw nothing of this public opinion, or else he accepted and shared the general dissimulation. He owed to the Comte de Marsay the greatest degree of elevation to which he could attain. De Marsay, whose knowledge of Maxime was of long-standing, judged him capable of fulfilling certain secret and diplomatic functions which he confided to him and of which de Trailles acquitted himself admirably. D'Arthèz had for some time past mingled sufficiently in political matters to know the man for what he was, and he alone had sufficient strength and height of character

to express aloud what others thought or said in a whisper.

"Is it for her that you neglect the Chamber?" asked Baron de Nucingen in his German accent.

"Ah! the princess is one of the most dangerous women a man can have anything to do with. I owe to her the miseries of my marriage," exclaimed the Marquis d'Esgrignon.

"Dangerous?" said Madame d'Espard. "Don't speak so of my nearest friend. I have never seen or known anything in the princess that did not seem to come from the noblest sentiments."

"Let the marquis say what he thinks," cried Rastignac. "When a man has been thrown by a fine horse he thinks it has vices and he sells it."

Piqued by these words, the Marquis d'Esgrignon looked at d'Arthèz and said:—

"Monsieur is not, I trust, on such terms with the princess that we cannot speak freely of her?"

D'Arthèz kept silence. D'Esgrignon, who was not wanting in cleverness, replied to Rastignac's speech with an apologetic portrait of the princess, which put the whole table in good humor. As the jest was extremely obscure to d'Arthèz he leaned toward his neighbor, Madame de Montcornet, and asked her, in a whisper, what it meant.

"Excepting yourself — judging by the excellent

opinion you seem to have of the princess — all the other guests are said to have been in her good graces.”

“I can assure you that such an accusation is absolutely false,” said Daniel.

“And yet, here is Monsieur d’Esgrignon of an old family of Alençon, who completely ruined himself for her some twelve years ago, and, if all is true, came very near going to the scaffold.”

“I know the particulars of that affair,” said d’Arthèz. “Madame de Cadignan went to Alençon to save Monsieur d’Esgrignon from a trial before the court of assizes; and this is how he rewards her to-day!”

Madame de Montcornet looked at d’Arthèz with a surprise and curiosity that were almost stupid, then she turned her eyes on Madame d’Espard with a look which seemed to say: “He is bewitched!”

During this short conversation Madame de Cadignan was protected by Madame d’Espard, whose protection was like that of the lightning-rod which draws the flash. When d’Arthèz returned to the general conversation Maxime de Trailles was saying: —

“With Diane, depravity is not an effect but a cause; perhaps she owes that cause to her exquisite nature; she doesn’t invent, she makes no effort, she offers you the choicest refinements as the inspiration of a spontaneous and naïve love; and it is absolutely impossible not to believe her.”

This speech, which seemed to have been prepared for a man of d'Arthèz's stamp, was so tremendous an arraignment that the company appeared to accept it as a conclusion. No one said more; the princess was crushed. D'Arthèz looked straight at de Trailles and then at d'Esgrignon with a sarcastic air, and said:—

"The greatest fault of that woman is that she has followed in the wake of men. She squanders patrimonies as they do; she drives her lovers to usurers; she pockets *dots*; she ruins orphans; she inspires, possibly she commits, crimes, but —"

Never had the two men, whom d'Arthèz was chiefly addressing, listened to such plain talk. At that *but* the whole table was startled, every one paused, fork in air, their eyes fixed alternately on the brave author and on the assailants of the princess, awaiting the conclusion of that horrible silence.

"*But*," said d'Arthèz, with sarcastic airiness, "Madame la Princesse de Cadignan has one advantage over men: when they have put themselves in danger for her sake, she saves them, and says no harm of any one. Among the multitude, why shouldn't there be one woman who amuses herself with men as men amuse themselves with women? Why not allow the fair sex to take, from time to time, its revenge?"

"Genius is stronger than wit," said Blondet to Nathan.

This broadside of sarcasms was in fact the discharge of a battery of cannon against a platoon of musketry. When coffee was served, Blondet and Nathan went up to d'Arthèz with an eagerness no one else dared to imitate, so unable were the rest of the company to show the admiration his conduct inspired from the fear of making two powerful enemies.

"This is not the first time we have seen that your character equals your talent in grandeur," said Blondet. "You behaved just now more like a demi-god than a man. Not to have been carried away by your heart or your imagination, not to have taken up the defence of a beloved woman—a fault they were enticing you to commit, because it would have given those men of society eaten up with jealousy of your literary fame a triumph over you—ah! give me leave to say you have attained the height of private statesmanship."

"Yes, you are a statesman," said Nathan. "It is as clever as it is difficult to avenge a woman without defending her."

"The princess is one of the heroines of the legitimist party, and it is the duty of all men of honor to protect her *quand même*," replied d'Arthèz, coldly. "What she has done for the cause of her masters would excuse all follies."

"He keeps his own counsel!" said Nathan to Blondet.

"Precisely as if the princess were worth it," said Rastignac, joining the other two.

D'Arthèz went to the princess, who was awaiting him with the keenest anxiety. The result of this experiment, which Diane had herself brought about, might be fatal to her. For the first time in her life this woman suffered in her heart. She knew not what she should do in case d'Arthèz believed the world which spoke the truth, instead of believing her who lied; for never had so noble a nature, so complete a man, a soul so pure, a conscience so ingenuous come beneath her hand. Though she had told him cruel lies she was driven to do so by the desire of knowing a true love. That love — she felt it dawning in her heart; yes, she loved d'Arthèz; and now she was condemned forever to deceive him! She must henceforth remain to him the actress who had played that comedy to blind his eyes.

When she heard Daniel's step in the dining-room a violent commotion, a shudder which reached to her very vitals came over her. That convulsion, never felt during all the years of her adventurous existence, told her that she had staked her happiness on this issue. Her eyes, gazing into space, took in the whole of d'Arthèz's person; their light poured through his flesh, she read his soul; suspicion had not so much as touched him with its bat's-wing. The terrible emo-

tion of that fear then came to its reaction; joy almost stifled her; for there is no human being who is not more able to endure grief than to bear extreme felicity.

"Daniel, they have calumniated me, and you have avenged me!" she cried, rising, and opening her arms to him.

In the profound amazement caused by these words, the roots of which were utterly unknown to him, Daniel allowed his head to be taken between her beautiful hands, as the princess kissed him sacredly on the forehead.

"But," he said, "how could you know —"

"Oh! illustrious ninny! do you not see that I love you fondly?"

Since that day nothing has been said of the Princesse de Cadignan, nor of d'Arthèz. The princess has inherited some fortune from her mother and she spends all her summers in a villa on the lake of Geneva, where the great writer joins her. She returns to Paris for a few months in winter. D'Arthèz is never seen except in the Chamber. His writings are becoming exceedingly rare. Is this a conclusion? Yes, for people of sense; no, for persons who want to know everything.

UNCONSCIOUS COMEDIANS.

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TO MONSIEUR LE COMTE JULES DE CASTELLANE.

I.

LÉON DE LORA, our celebrated landscape painter, belongs to one of the noblest families of the Roussillon (Spanish originally) which, although distinguished for the antiquity of its race, has been doomed for a century to the proverbial poverty of hidalgos. Coming, light-footed, to Paris from the department of the Eastern Pyrenees, with the sum of eleven francs in his pocket for all viaticum, he had in some degree forgotten the miseries and privations of his childhood and his family amid the other privations and miseries which are never lacking to *rapins*, whose whole fortune consists of intrepid vocation. Later, the cares of fame and those of success were other causes of forgetfulness.

If you have followed the capricious and meandering course of these studies, perhaps you will remember Mistigris, Schinner's pupil, one of the heroes of "A Start in Life" (*Scenes from Private Life*), and his brief apparitions in other Scenes. In 1845, this landscape painter, emulator of the Hobbemas, Ruysdaels, and Lorraines, resembles no longer the shabby, frisky *rapin* whom we then knew. Now an illustrious man, he owns a charming house in the rue de Berlin, not far from the hôtel de Brambourg, where his friend Brideau lives, and quite close to the house of Schinner, his early master. He is a member of the Institute and an officer of the Legion of honor; he is thirty-six years old, has an income of twenty thousand francs from the Funds, his pictures sell for their weight in gold, and (what seems to him more extraordinary than the invitations he receives occasionally to court balls) his name and fame, mentioned so often for the last sixteen years by the press of Europe, has at last penetrated to the valley of the Eastern Pyrenees, where vegetate three veritable Loras: his father, his eldest brother, and an old paternal aunt, Mademoiselle Urraca y Lora.

In the maternal line the painter has no relation left except a cousin, the nephew of his mother, residing in a small manufacturing town in the department. This cousin was the first to bethink himself of Léon. But

It was not till 1840 that Léon de Lora received a letter from Monsieur Sylvestre Palafox-Castel-Gazonal (called simply Gazonal) to which he replied that he was assuredly himself, — that is to say, the son of the late Léonie Gazonal, wife of Comte Fernand Didas y Lora.

During the summer of 1841 cousin Sylvestre Gazonal went to inform the illustrious unknown family of Lora that their little Léon had not gone to the Rio de la Plata, as they supposed, but was now one of the greatest geniuses of the French school of painting; a fact the family did not believe. The eldest son, Don Juan de Lora assured his cousin Gazonal that he was certainly the dupe of some Parisian wag.

Now the said Gazonal was intending to go to Paris to prosecute a lawsuit which the prefect of the Eastern Pyrenees had arbitrarily removed from the usual jurisdiction, transferring it to that of the Council of State. The worthy provincial determined to investigate this act, and to ask his Parisian cousin the reason of such high-handed measures. It thus happened that Monsieur Gazonal came to Paris, took shabby lodgings in the rue Croix-des-Petits-Champs, and was amazed to see the palace of his cousin in the rue de Berlin. Being told that the painter was then travelling in Italy, he renounced, for the time being, the intention of asking his advice, and doubted if he should ever

find his maternal relationship acknowledged by so great a man.

During the years 1843 and 1844 Gazonal attended to his lawsuit. This suit concerned a question as to the current and level of a stream of water and the necessity of removing a dam, in which dispute the administration, instigated by the abutters on the river banks, had meddled. The removal of the dam threatened the existence of Gazonal's manufactory. In 1845, Gazonal considered his cause as wholly lost; the secretary of the Master of Petitions, charged with the duty of drawing up the report, had confided to him that the said report would assuredly be against him, and his own lawyer confirmed the statement. Gazonal, though commander of the National Guard in his own town and one of the most capable manufacturers of the department, found himself of so little account in Paris, and he was, moreover, so frightened by the costs of living and the dearness of even the most trifling things, that he kept himself, all this time, secluded in his shabby lodgings. The Southerner, deprived of his sun, execrated Paris, which he called a manufactory of rheumatism. As he added up the costs of his suit and his living, he vowed within himself to poison the prefect on his return, or to minotaurize him. In his moments of deepest sadness he killed the prefect outright; in gayer mood he contented himself with minotaurizing him.

One morning, as he ate his breakfast and cursed his fate, he picked up a newspaper savagely. The following lines, ending an article, struck Gazonal as if the mysterious voice which speaks to gamblers before they win had sounded in his ear: "Our celebrated landscape painter, Léon de Lora, lately returned from Italy, will exhibit several pictures at the Salon; thus the exhibition promises, as we see, to be most brilliant." With the suddenness of action that distinguishes the sons of the sunny South, Gazonal sprang from his lodgings to the street, from the street to a street-cab, and drove to the rue de Berlin to find his cousin.

Léon de Lora sent word by a servant to his cousin Gazonal that he invited him to breakfast the next day at the Café de Paris, but he was now engaged in a manner which did not allow him to receive his cousin at the present moment. Gazonal, like a true Southerner, recounted all his troubles to the valet.

The next day at ten o'clock, Gazonal, much too well-dressed for the occasion (he had put on his bottle-blue coat with brass buttons, a frilled shirt, a white waistcoat and yellow gloves), awaited his amphitryon a full hour, stamping his feet on the boulevard, after hearing from the master of the café that "these gentlemen" breakfasted habitually between eleven and twelve o'clock.

"Between eleven and half-past," he said when he related his adventures to his cronies in the provinces, "two Parisians in simple frock-coats, looking like *nothing at all*, called out when they saw me on the boulevard, 'There's our Gazonal!'"

The speaker was Bixiou, with whom Léon de Lora had armed himself to "bring out" his provincial cousin, in other words, to make him *pose*.

"'Don't be vexed, cousin, I'm at your service!' cried out that little Léon, taking me in his arms," related Gazonal on his return home. "The breakfast was splendid. I thought I was going blind when I saw the number of bits of gold it took to pay that bill. Those fellows must earn their weight in gold, for I saw my cousin give the waiter *thirty sous* — the price of a whole day's work!"

During this monstrous breakfast — advisedly so called in view of six dozen Ostend oysters, six cutlets à la Soubise, a chicken à la Marengo, lobster mayonnaise, green peas, a mushroom pasty, washed down with three bottles of Bordeaux, three bottles of Champagne, plus coffee and liqueurs, to say nothing of relishes — Gazonal was magnificent in his diatribes against Paris. The worthy manufacturer complained of the length of the four-pound bread-loaves, the height of the houses, the indifference of the passengers in the streets to one another, the cold, the rain,

the cost of hackney-coaches, all of which and much else he bemoaned in so witty a manner that the two artists took a mighty fancy to cousin Gazonal, and made him relate his lawsuit from beginning to end.

"My lawsuit," he said in his Southern accent and rolling his r's, "is a very simple thing; they want my manufactory. I've employed here in Paris a dolt of a lawyer, to whom I give twenty francs every time he opens an eye, and he is always asleep. He's a slug, who drives in his coach, while I go afoot and he splashes me. I see now I ought to have had a carriage. Nobody is looked at unless he is hidden in a carriage! On the other hand, that Council of State are a pack of do-nothings, who leave their duties to little scamps every one of whom is bought up by our prefect. That's my lawsuit! They want my manufactory! Well, they'll get it! and they must manage the best they can with my workmen, a hundred of 'em, who'll make them sing another tune before they've done with them."

"How long have you been here, cousin?" asked Léon de Lora.

"Two years. Ha! that meddling prefect! he shall pay dear for this; I'll have his life if I have to give mine on the scaffold —"

"Which state councillor presides over your section?"

"A former newspaper man, — does n't pay ten sous in taxes, — his name is Massol."

The two Parisians exchanged glances.

"Who is the commissioner who is making the report?"

"Ha! that's still more queer; he's Master of Petitions, professor of something or other at the Sorbonne, — a fellow who writes things in reviews, and for whom I have the profoundest contempt."

"Claude Vignon," said Bixiou.

"Yes, that's his name," replied Gazonal. "Massol and Vignon — there you have Social Reason, in which there's no reason at all."

"There must be some way out of it," said Léon de Lora. "You see, cousin, all things are possible in Paris for good as well as for evil, for the just as well as the unjust. There's nothing that can't be done, undone, and redone."

"The devil take me if I stay ten days more in this hole of a place, the dullest in all France!"

The two cousins and Bixiou were at this moment walking from one end to the other of that sheet of asphalt on which, between the hours of one and three, it is difficult to avoid seeing some of the personages in honor of whom Fame puts one or other of her trumpets to her lips. Formerly that locality was the Place Royale; next it was the Pont Neuf; in these days this privilege has been acquired by the Boulevard des Italiens.

"Paris," said the painter to his cousin, "is an instrument on which we must know how to play; if we stand here ten minutes I'll give you your first lesson. There, look!" he said, raising his cane and pointing to a couple who were just then coming out from the Passage de l'Opéra.

"Goodness! who's that?" asked Gazonal.

That was an old woman, in a bonnet which had spent six months in a show-case, a very pretentious gown and a faded tartan shawl, whose face had been buried twenty years of her life in a damp lodge, and whose swollen hand-bag betokened no better social position than that of an ex-portress. With her was a slim little girl, whose eyes, fringed with black lashes, had lost their innocence and showed great weariness; her face, of a pretty shape, was fresh and her hair abundant, her forehead charming but audacious, her bust thin, — in other words, an unripe fruit.

"That," replied Bixiou, "is a rat tied to its mother."

"A rat! — what's that?"

"That particular rat," said Léon, with a friendly nod to Mademoiselle Ninette, "may perhaps win your suit for you."

Gazonal bounded; but Bixiou had held him by the arm ever since they left the café, thinking perhaps that the flush on his face was rather vivid.

"That rat, who is just leaving a rehearsal at the

Opera-house, is going home to eat a miserable dinner, and will return about three o'clock to dress, if she dances in the ballet this evening — as she will, to-day being Monday. This rat is already an old rat for she is thirteen years of age. Two years from now that creature may be worth sixty thousand francs; she will be all or nothing, a great *danseuse* or a *marcheuse*, a celebrated person or a vulgar courtesan. She has worked hard since she was eight years old. Such as you see her, she is worn out with fatigue; she exhausted her body this morning in the dancing-class, she is just leaving a rehearsal where the evolutions are as complicated as a Chinese puzzle; and she'll go through them again to-night. The rat is one of the primary elements of the Opera; she is to the leading *danseuse* what a junior clerk is to a notary. The rat is — hope."

"Who produces the rat?" asked Gazonal.

"Porters, paupers, actors, dancers," replied Bixiou. "Only the lowest depths of poverty could force a child to subject her feet and joints to positive torture, to keep herself virtuous out of mere speculation until she is eighteen years of age, and to live with some horrible old crone like a beautiful plant in a dressing of manure. You shall now see a procession defiling before you, one after the other, of men of talent, little and great, artists in seed or flower, who are rais-

ing to the glory of France that every-day monument called the Opera, an assemblage of forces, wills, and forms of genius, nowhere collected as in Paris."

"I have already seen the Opera," said Gazonal, with a self-sufficient air.

"Yes, from a three-francs-sixty-sous seat among the gods," replied the landscape painter; "just as you have seen Paris in the rue Croix-des-Petits-Champs, without knowing anything about it. What did they give at the Opera when you were there?"

"Guillaume Tell."

"Well," said Léon, "Matilde's grand *duo* must have delighted you. What do you suppose that charming singer did when she left the stage?"

"She — well, what?"

"She ate two bloody mutton-chops which her servant had ready for her."

"Pooh! nonsense!"

"Malibran kept up on brandy — but it killed her in the end. Another thing! You have seen the ballet, and you'll now see it defiling past you in its every-day clothes, without knowing that the fate of your lawsuit depends on a pair of those legs."

"My lawsuit!"

"See, consin, here comes what is called a *marcheuse*."

Léon pointed to one of those handsome creatures who at twenty-five years of age have lived sixty, and

whose beauty is so real and so sure of being cultivated that they make no display of it. She was tall, and walked well, with the arrogant look of a dandy; her toilet was remarkable for its ruinous simplicity.

"That is Carabine," said Bixiou, who gave her, as did Léon, a slight nod to which she responded by a smile.

"There's another who may possibly get your prefect turned out."

"A *marcheuse*!—but what is that?"

"A *marcheuse* is a rat of great beauty whom her mother, real or fictitious, has sold as soon as it was clear she would become neither first, second, nor third *danseuse*, but who prefers the occupation of *coryphée* to any other, for the main reason that having spent her youth in that employment she is unfitted for any other. She has been rejected at the minor theatres where they want *danseuses*; she has not succeeded in the three towns in the provinces where ballets are given; she has not had the money, or perhaps the desire to go to foreign countries—for perhaps you don't know that the great school of dancing in Paris supplies the whole world with male and female dancers. Thus a rat who becomes a *marcheuse*,—that is to say, an ordinary *figurante* in a ballet,—must have some solid attachment which keeps her in Paris: either a rich man she does not love or a poor man she loves

too well. The one you have just seen pass will probably dress and redress three times this evening, — as a princess, a peasant-girl, a Tyrolese; by which she will earn about two hundred francs a month."

"She is better dressed than my prefect's wife."

"If you should go to her house," said Bixiou, "you would find there a chamber-maid, a cook, and a manservant. She occupies a fine apartment in the rue Saint-Georges; in short, she is, in proportion to French fortunes of the present day compared with those of former times, a relic of the eighteenth century 'opera-girl.' Carabine is a power; at this moment she governs du Tillet, a banker who is very influential in the Chamber of Deputies."

"And above these two rounds in the ballet ladder what comes next?" asked Gazonal.

"Look!" said his cousin, pointing to an elegant *calèche* which was turning at that moment from the boulevard into the rue Grange-Batelière, "there's one of the leading *danseuses* whose name on the posters attracts all Paris. That woman earns sixty thousand francs a year and lives like a princess; the price of your manufactory all told would n't suffice to buy you the privilege of bidding her good-morning a dozen times."

"Do you see," said Bixiou, "that young man who is sitting on the front seat of her carriage? Well,

he's a viscount who bears a fine old name; he's her first gentleman of the bed-chamber; does all her business with the newspapers; carries messages of peace or war in the morning to the director of the Opera; and takes charge of the applause which salutes her as she enters or leaves the stage."

"Well, well, my good friends, that's the finishing touch! I see now that I knew nothing of the ways of Paris."

"At any rate, you are learning what you can see in ten minutes in the Passage de l'Opéra," said Bixiou. "Look there."

Two persons, a man and a woman, came out of the Passage at that moment. The woman was neither plain nor pretty; but her dress had that distinction of style and cut and color which reveals an artist; the man had the air of a singer.

"There," said Bixiou, "is a baritone and a second *danseuse*. The baritone is a man of immense talent, but a baritone voice being only an accessory to the other parts he scarcely earns what the second *danseuse* earns. The *danseuse*, who was celebrated before Taglioni and Ellsler appeared, has preserved to our day some of the old traditions of the character dance and pantomime. If the two others had not revealed in the art of dancing a poetry hitherto unperceived, she would have been the leading talent; as it is, she

is reduced to the second line. But for all that, she fingers her thirty thousand francs a year, and her faithful friend is a peer of France, very influential in the Chamber. And see! there's a *danseuse* of the third order, who, as a dancer, exists only through the omnipotence of a newspaper. If her engagement were not renewed the ministry would have one more journalistic enemy on its back. The *corps de ballet* is a great power; consequently it is considered better form in the upper ranks of dandyism and politics to have relations with dance than with song. In the stalls, where the *habitués* of the Opera congregate, the saying 'Monsieur is all for singing' is a form of ridicule."

A short man with a common face, quite simply dressed, passed them at this moment.

"There's the other half of the Opera receipts — that man who just went by; the tenor. There is no longer any play, poem, music, or representation of any kind possible unless some celebrated tenor can reach a certain note. The tenor is love, he is the Voice that touches the heart, that vibrates in the soul, and his value is reckoned at a much higher salary than that of a minister. One hundred thousand francs for a throat, one hundred thousand francs for a couple of ankle-bones, — those are the two financial scourges of the Opera."

"I am amazed," said Gazonal, "at the hundreds of thousands of francs walking about here."

"We'll amaze you a good deal more, my dear cousin," said Léon de Lora. "We'll take Paris as an artist takes his violoncello, and show you how it is played, — in short, how people amuse themselves in Paris."

"It is a kaleidoscope with a circumference of twenty miles," cried Gazonal.

"Before piloting monsieur about, I have to see Gaillard," said Bixiou.

"But we can use Gaillard for the cousin," replied Léon.

"What sort of machine is that?" asked Gazonal.

"He is n't a machine, he is a machinist. Gaillard is a friend of ours who has ended a miscellaneous career by becoming the editor of a newspaper, and whose character and finances are governed by movements comparable to those of the tides. Gaillard can contribute to make you win your lawsuit —"

"It is lost."

"That's the very moment to win it," replied Bixiou.

When they reached Théodore Gaillard's abode, which was now in the rue de Menars, the valet ushered the three friends into a boudoir and asked them to wait, as monsieur was in secret conference.

"With whom?" asked Bixiou.

"With a man who is selling him the incarceration of an *unseizable* debtor," replied a handsome woman who now appeared in a charming morning toilet.

"In that case, my dear Suzanne," said Bixiou, "I am certain we may go in."

"Oh! what a beautiful creature!" said Gazonal.

"That is Madame Gaillard," replied Léon de Lora, speaking low into his cousin's ear. "She is the most humble-minded woman in Paris, for she had the public and has contented herself with a husband."

"What is your will, messelgneurs?" said the factious editor, seeing his two friends and imitating Frédéric Lemaître.

Théodore Gaillard, formerly a wit, had ended by becoming a stupid man in consequence of remaining constantly in one centre, — a moral phenomenon frequently to be observed in Paris. His principal method of conversation consisted in sowing his speeches with sayings taken from plays then in vogue and pronounced in imitation of well-known actors.

"We have come to *blague*," said Léon.

"Again, young men?" (Odry in the *Saltimbanques*).

"Well, this time, we've got him, sure," said Gaillard's other visitor, apparently by way of conclusion.

"Are you sure of it, père Fromenteau?" asked Gaillard. "This is the eleventh time you've caught him at night and missed him in the morning."

"How could I help it? I never saw such a debtor! he's a locomotive; goes to sleep in Paris and wakes up in the Seine-et-Oise. A safety lock I call him." Seeing a smile on Gazonal's face he added: "That's a saying in our business. Pinch a man, means arrest him, lock him up. The criminal police have another term. Vidocq said to his man, 'You are served;' that's funnier, for it means the guillotine."

A nudge from Bixiou made Gazonal all eyes and ears.

"Does monsieur grease my paws?" asked Fromenteau of Gaillard, in a threatening but cool tone.

"A question that of fifty centimes" (Les Saltimbanques), replied the editor, taking out five francs and offering them to Fromenteau.

"And the rascallions?" said the man.

"What rascallions?" asked Gaillard.

"Those I employ," replied Fromenteau calmly.

"Is there a lower depth still?" asked Bixiou.

"Yes, monsieur," said the spy. "Some people give us information without knowing they do so, and without getting paid for it. I put fools and ninnies below rascallions."

"They are often original, and witty, your rascallions!" said Léon.

"Do you belong to the police?" asked Gazonal, eying with uneasy curiosity the hard, impassible

little man, who was dressed like the third clerk in a sheriff's office.

"Which police do you mean?" asked Fromenteau.

"Are there several?"

"As many as five," replied the man. "Criminal, the head of which was Vidocq; secret police, which keeps an eye on the other police, the head of it being always unknown; political police, — that's Fouché's. Then there's the police of Foreign Affairs, and finally, the palace police (of the Emperor, Louis XVIII., etc.), always squabbling with that of the quai Malaquais. It came to an end under Monsieur Decazes. I belonged to the police of Louis XVIII.; I'd been in it since 1793, with that poor Contenson."

The four gentlemen looked at each other with one thought: "How many heads he must have brought to the scaffold!"

"Now-a-days, they are trying to get on without us. Folly!" continued the little man, who began to seem terrible. "Since 1830 they want honest men at the prefecture! I resigned, and I've made myself a small vocation by arresting for debt."

"He is the right arm of the commercial police," said Gaillard in Bixiou's ear, "but you can never find out who pays him most, the debtor or the creditor."

"The more rascally a business is, the more honor it needs. I'm for him who pays me best," continued

Fromenteau addressing Gaillard. "You want to recover fifty thousand francs and you talk farthings to your means of action. Give me five hundred francs and your man is pinched to-night, for we spotted him yesterday."

"Five hundred francs for you alone!" cried Théodore Gaillard.

"Lizette wants a shawl," said the spy, not a muscle of his face moving. "I call her Lizette because of Béranger."

"You have a Lizette, and you stay in such a business!" cried the virtuous Gazonal.

"It is amusing! People may cry up the pleasures of hunting and fishing as much as they like but to stalk a man in Paris is far better fun."

"Certainly," said Gazonal, reflectively, speaking to himself, "they must have great talent."

"If I were to enumerate the qualities which make a man remarkable in our vocation," said Fromenteau, whose rapid glance had enabled him to fathom Gazonal completely, "you'd think I was talking of a man of genius. First, we must have the eyes of a lynx; next, audacity (to tear into houses like bombs, accost the servants as if we knew them, and propose treachery — always agreed to); next, memory, sagacity, invention (to make schemes, conceived rapidly, never the same — for spying must be guided by the characters

and habits of the persons spied upon; it is a gift of heaven); and, finally, agility, vigor. All those facilities and qualities, monsieur, are depicted on the door of the *Gymnase-Amoros* as *Virtue*. Well, we must have them all, under pain of losing the salaries given us by the State, the *rue de Jerusalem*, or the minister of Commerce."

"You certainly seem to me a remarkable man," said Gazonal.

Fromenteau looked at the provincial without replying, without betraying the smallest sign of feeling, and departed, bowing to no one,—a trait of real genius.

"Well, cousin, you have now seen the police incarnate," said Léon to Gazonal.

"It has something the effect of a dinner-pill," said the worthy provincial, while Gaillard and Bixiou were talking together in a low voice.

"I'll give you an answer to-night at Carabine's," said Gaillard aloud, re-seating himself at his desk without seeing or bowing to Gazonal.

"He is a rude fellow!" cried the Southerner as they left the room.

"His paper has twenty-two thousand subscribers," said Léon de Lora. "He is one of the five great powers of the day, and he has n't, in the morning, the time to be polite. Now," continued Léon, speaking

to Bixiou, "if we are going to the Chamber to help him with his lawsuit let us take the longest way round."

"Words said by great men are like silver-gilt spoons with the gilt washed off; by dint of repetition they lose their brilliancy," said Bixiou. "Where shall we go?"

"Here, close by, to our hatter," replied Léon.

"Bravo!" cried Bixiou. "If we keep on in this way, we shall have an amusing day of it."

"Gazonal," said Léon, "I shall make the man *pose* for you; but mind that you keep a serious face, like the king on a five-franc piece, for you are going to see a choice original, a man whose importance has turned his head. In these days, my dear fellow, under our new political dispensation, every human being tries to cover himself with glory, and most of them cover themselves with ridicule; hence a lot of living caricatures quite new to the world."

"If everybody gets glory, who can be famous?" said Gazonal.

"Fame! none but fools want that," replied Bixiou. "Your cousin wears the cross, but I'm the better dressed of the two, and it is I whom people are looking at."

After this remark, which may explain why orators and other great statesmen no longer put the ribbon in

their buttonholes when in Paris, Léon showed Gazonal a sign, bearing, in golden letters, the illustrious name of VITAL, *successor to FINOT, manufacturer of hats* (no longer "hatter" as formerly), whose advertisements brought in more money to the newspapers than those of any half-dozen vendors of pills or sugarplums, — the author, moreover, of an essay on hats.

"My dear fellow," said Bixiou to Gazonal, pointing to the splendors of the show-window, "Vital has forty thousand francs a year from invested property."

"And he stays a hatter!" cried the Southerner, with a bound that almost broke the arm which Bixiou had linked in his.

"You shall see the man," said Léon. "You need a hat and you shall have one gratis."

"Is Monsieur Vital absent?" asked Bixiou, seeing no one behind the desk.

"Monsieur is correcting proof in his study," replied the head clerk.

"Hein! what style!" said Léon to his cousin; then he added, addressing the clerk: "Could we speak to him without injury to his inspiration?"

"Let those gentlemen enter," said a voice.

It was a bourgeois voice, the voice of one eligible to the Chamber, a powerful voice, a wealthy voice.

Vital deigned to show himself, dressed entirely in

black cloth, with a splendid frilled shirt adorned with one diamond. The three friends observed a young and pretty woman sitting near the desk, working at some embroidery.

Vital is a man between thirty and forty years of age, with a natural joviality now repressed by ambitious ideas. He is blessed with that medium height which is the privilege of sound organizations. He is rather plump, and takes great pains with his person. His forehead is getting bald, but he uses that circumstance to give himself the air of a man consumed by thought. It is easy to see by the way his wife looks at him and listens to him that she believes in the genius and glory of her husband. Vital loves artists, not that he has any taste for art, but from fellowship; for he feels himself an artist, and makes this felt by disclaiming that title of nobility; and placing himself with constant premeditation at so great a distance from the arts that persons may be forced to say to him: "You have raised the construction of hats to the height of a science."

"Have you at last discovered a hat to suit me?" asked Léon de Lora.

"Why, monsieur! in fifteen days?" replied Vital, "and for you! Two months would hardly suffice to invent a shape in keeping with your countenance. See, here is your lithographic portrait: I have studied

it most carefully. I would not give myself that trouble for a prince; but you are more; you are an artist, and you understand me."

"This is one of our greatest inventors," said Bixiou presenting Gazonal. "He might be as great as Jacquart if he would only let himself die. Our friend, a manufacturer of cloth, has discovered a method of replacing the indigo in old blue coats, and he wants to see you as another great phenomenon, because he has heard of your saying, 'The hat is the man.' That speech of yours enraptured him. Ah! Vital, you have faith; you believe in something; you have enthusiasm for your work."

Vital scarcely listened; he grew pale with pleasure.

"Rise, my wife! Monsieur is a prince of science."

Madame Vital rose at her husband's gesture. Gazonal bowed to her.

"Shall I have the honor to cover your head?" said Vital, with joyful obsequiousness.

"At the same price as mine," interposed Bixiou.

"Of course, of course; I ask no other fee than to be quoted by you, messieurs — Monsieur needs a picturesque hat, something in the style of Monsieur Lousteau's," he continued, looking at Gazonal with the eye of a master. "I will consider it."

"You give yourself a great deal of trouble," said Gazonal.

“Oh! for a few persons only; for those who know how to appreciate the value of the pains I bestow upon them: Now, take the aristocracy — there is but one man there who has truly comprehended the Hat; and that is the Prince de Béthune. How is it that men do not consider, as women do, that the hat is the first thing that strikes the eye? And why have they never thought of changing the present system, which is, let us say it frankly, ignoble? Yes, ignoble; and yet a Frenchman is, of all nationalities, the one most persistent in this folly! I know the difficulties of a change, messieurs. I don't speak of my own writings on the matter, which, as I think, approach it philosophically, but simply as a hatter. I have myself studied means to accentuate the infamous head-covering to which France is now enslaved until I succeed in overthrowing it.”

So saying he pointed to the hideous hat in vogue at the present day.

“Behold the enemy, messieurs,” he continued. “How is it that the wittiest and most satirical people on earth will consent to wear upon their heads a bit of stove-pipe? — as one of our great writers has called it. Here are some of the inflections I have been able to give to those atrocious lines,” he added, pointing to a number of his *creations*. “But, although I am able to conform them to the character of each wearer — for,

as you see, here are the hats of a doctor, a grocer, a dandy, an artist, a fat man, a thin man, and so forth — the style itself remains horrible. Seize, I beg of you, my whole thought — ”

He took up a hat, low-crowned and wide-brimmed.

“This,” he continued, “is the old hat of Claude Vignon, a great critic, in the days when he was a free man and a free-liver. He has lately come round to the ministry; they’ve made him a professor, a librarian; he writes now for the *Débats* only; they’ve appointed him Master of Petitions with a salary of sixteen thousand francs; he earns four thousand more out of his paper, and he is decorated. Well, now see his new hat.”

And Vital showed them a hat of a form and design which was truly expressive of the *juste-milieu*.

“You ought to have made him a Punch and Judy hat!” cried Gazonal.

“You are a man of genius, Monsieur Vital,” said Léon.

Vital bowed.

“Would you kindly tell me why the shops of your trade in Paris remain open late at night, — later than the cafés and the wineshops? That fact puzzles me very much,” said Gazonal.

“In the first place, our shops are much finer when lighted up than they are in the daytime; next, where

we sell ten hats in the daytime we sell fifty at night."

"Everything is queer in Paris," said Léon.

"Thanks to my efforts and my successes," said Vital, returning to the course of his self-laudation, "we are coming to hats with round headpieces. It is to that I tend!"

"What obstacle is there?" asked Gazonal.

"Cheapness, monsieur. In the first place, very handsome silk hats can be built for fifteen francs, which kills our business; for in Paris no one ever has fifteen francs in his pocket to spend on a hat. If a beaver hat costs thirty, it is still the same thing — When I say *beaver*, I ought to state that there are not ten pounds of beaver skins left in France. That article is worth three hundred and fifty francs a pound, and it takes an ounce for a hat. Besides, a beaver hat is n't really worth anything; the skin takes a wretched dye; gets rusty in ten minutes in the sun, and heat puts it out of shape as well. What we call 'beaver' in the trade is neither more nor less than hare's-skin. The best qualities are made from the back of the animal, the second from the sides, the third from the belly. I confide to you these trade secrets because you are men of honor. But whether a man has hare's-skin or silk on his head, fifteen or thirty francs in short, the problem is always insoluble.

Hats must be paid for in cash, and that is why the hat remains what it is. The honor of vestural France will be saved on the day that gray hats with round crowns can be made to cost a hundred francs. We could then, like the tailors, give credit. To reach that result men must resolve to wear buckles, gold lace, plumes, and the brims lined with satin, as in the days of Louis XIII. and Louis XIV. Our business, which would then enter the domain of fancy, would increase tenfold. The markets of the world should belong to France; Paris will forever give the tone to women's fashions, and yet the hats which all Frenchmen wear to-day are made in every country on earth! There are ten millions of foreign money to be gained annually for France in that question —"

"A revolution!" cried Bixion, pretending enthusiasm.

"Yes, and a radical one; for the form must be changed."

"You are happy after the manner of Luther in dreaming of reform," said Léon.

"Yes, monsieur. Ah! if a dozen or fifteen artists, capitalists, or dandies who set the tone would only have courage for twenty-four hours France would gain a splendid commercial battle! To succeed in this reform I would give my whole fortune! Yes, my sole ambition is to regenerate the hat and disappear."

"The man is colossal," said Gazonal, as they left the shop; "but I assure you that all your originals so far have a touch of the Southerner about them."

"Let us go this way," said Bixiou pointing to the rue Saint-Marc.

"Do you want to show me something else?"

"Yes; you shall see the *usuress* of rats, *marcheuses* and great ladies, — a woman who possesses more terrible secrets than there are gowns hanging in her window," said Bixiou.

And he showed Gazonal one of those untidy shops which make an ugly stain in the midst of the dazzling show-windows of modern retail commerce. This shop had a front painted in 1820, which some bankrupt had doubtless left in a dilapidated condition. The color had disappeared beneath a double coating of dirt, the result of usage, and a thick layer of dust; the window-panes were filthy, the door-knob turned of itself, as door-knobs do in all places where people go out more quickly than they enter.

"What do you say of *that*? First cousin to Death, is n't she?" said Léon in Gazonal's ear, showing him, at the desk, a terrible individual. "Well, she calls herself Madame Nourrisson."

"Madame, how much is this guipure?" asked the manufacturer, intending to compete in liveliness with the two artists.

"To you, monsieur, who come from the country, it will be only three hundred francs," she replied. Then, remarking in his manner a sort of eagerness peculiar to Southerners, she added, in a grieved tone, "It formerly belonged to that poor Princesse de Lamballe."

"What! do you dare exhibit it so near the palace?" cried Bixiou.

"Monsieur, *they* don't believe in it," she replied.

"Madame, we have not come to make purchases," said Bixiou, with a show of frankness.

"So I see, monsieur," returned Madame Nourrisson.

"We have several things to sell," said the illustrious caricaturist. "I live close by, rue de Richelieu, 112, sixth floor. If you will come round there for a moment, you may perhaps make some good bargains."

Ten minutes later Madame Nourrisson did in fact present herself at Bixiou's lodgings, where by that time he had taken Léon and Gazonal. Madame Nourrisson found them all three as serious as authors whose collaboration does not meet with the success it deserves.

"Madame," said the intrepid hoaxer, showing her a pair of women's slippers, "these belonged formerly to the Empress Josephine."

He felt it incumbent on him to return change for the Princesse de Lamballe.

"Those!" she exclaimed; "they were made this year; look at the mark."

"Don't you perceive that the slippers are only by way of preface?" said Léon; "though, to be sure, they are usually the conclusion of a tale."

"My friend here," said Bixiou, motioning to Gazonal, "has an immense family interest in ascertaining whether a young lady of a good and wealthy house, whom he wishes to marry, has ever gone wrong."

"How much will monsieur give for the information," she asked, looking at Gazonal, who was no longer surprised by anything.

"One hundred francs," he said.

"No, thank you!" she said with a grimace of refusal worthy of a macaw.

"Then say how much you want, my little Madame Nourrisson," cried Bixiou catching her round the waist.

"In the first place, my dear gentlemen, I have never, since I've been in the business, found man or woman to haggle over happiness. Besides," she said, letting a cold smile flicker on her lips, and enforcing it by an icy glance full of catlike distrust, "if it does n't concern your happiness, it concerns your fortune; and at the height where I find you lodging no man haggles over a *dot* — Come," she said, "out with it! What is it you want to know, my lambs?"

"About the Beunier family," replied Bixiou, very

glad to find out something in this indirect manner about persons in whom he was interested.

"Oh! as for that," she said, "one louis is quite enough."

"Why?"

"Because I hold all the mother's jewels and she's on tenter-hooks every three months, I can tell you! It is hard work for her to pay the interest on what I've lent her. Do you want to marry there, simpleton?" she added, addressing Gazonal; "then pay me forty francs and I'll talk four hundred worth."

Gazonal produced a forty-franc gold-piece, and Madame Nourrisson gave him startling details as to the secret penury of certain so-called fashionable women. This dealer in cast-off clothes, getting lively as she talked, pictured herself unconsciously while telling of others. Without betraying a single name or any secret, she made the three men shudder by proving to them how little so-called happiness existed in Paris that did not rest on the vacillating foundation of borrowed money. She possessed, laid away in her drawers, the secrets of departed grandmothers, living children, deceased husbands, dead granddaughters, — memories set in gold and diamonds. She learned appalling histories by making her clients talk of one another; tearing their secrets from them in moments of passion, of quarrels, of anger, and during

those cooler negotiations which need a loan to settle difficulties.

"Why were you ever induced to take up such a business?" asked Gazonal.

"For my son's sake," she said naïvely.

Such women almost invariably justify their trade by alleging noble motives. Madame Nourrisson posed as having lost several opportunities for marriage, also three daughters who had gone to the bad, and all her illusions. She showed the pawn-tickets of the Mont-de-Piété to prove the risks her business ran; declared she did not know how to meet the "end of the month;" she was robbed, she said, — *robbed*.

The two artists looked at each other on hearing that expression, which seemed exaggerated.

"Look here, my sons, I'll show you how we are *done*. It is not about myself, but about my opposite neighbor, Madame Mahuchet, a ladies' shoemaker. I had loaned money to a countess, a woman who has too many passions for her means, — lives in a fine apartment filled with splendid furniture, and makes, as we say, a devil of a show with her high and mighty airs. She owed three hundred francs to her shoemaker, and was giving a dinner no later than yesterday. The shoemaker, who heard of the dinner from the cook, came to see me; we got excited, and she wanted to make a row; but I said: 'My dear Madame Mahuchet,

what good will that do? you'll only get yourself hated. It is much better to obtain some security; and you save your bile.' She wouldn't listen, but go she would, and asked me to support her; so I went. 'Madame is not at home.' — 'Up to that! we'll wait,' said Madame Mahuchet, 'if we have to stay all night,' — and down we camped in the antechamber. Presently the doors began to open and shut, and feet and voices came along. I felt badly. The guests were arriving for dinner. You can see the appearance it had. The countess sent her maid to coax Madame Mahuchet: 'Pay you to-morrow!' in short, all the suares! Nothing took. The countess, dressed to the nines, went to the dining-room. Mahuchet heard her and opened the door. Gracious! when she saw that table sparkling with silver, the covers to the dishes and the chandeliers all glittering like a jewel-case, didn't she go off like soda-water and fire her shot: 'When people spend the money of others they should be sober and not give dinner-parties. Think of your being a countess and owing three hundred francs to a poor shoemaker with seven children!' You can guess how she railed, for the Mahuchet has n't any education. When the countess tried to make an excuse ('no money') Mahuchet screamed out: 'Look at all your fine silver, madame; pawn it and pay me!' — 'Take some yourself,' said the countess quickly,

gathering up a quantity of forks and spoons and putting them into her hands. Downstairs we rattled! — heavens! like success itself. No, before we got to the street Mahuchet began to cry — she's a kind woman! She turned back and restored the silver; for she now understood that countess's poverty — it was plated ware!"

"And she forked it over," said Léon, in whom the former Mistigris occasionally reappeared.

"Ah! my dear monsieur," said Madame Nourrisson, enlightened by the slang, "you are an artist, you write plays, you live in the rue du Helder and are friends with Madame Antonia; you have habits that I know all about. Come, do you want some rarity in the grand style,— Carabine or Mousqueton, Malaga or Jenny Cadine?"

"Malaga, Carabine! nonsense!" cried Léon de Lora. "It was we who invented them."

"I assure you, my good Madame Nourrisson," said Bixiou, "that we only wanted the pleasure of making your acquaintance, and we should like very much to be informed as to how you ever came to slip into this business."

"I was confidential maid in the family of a marshal of France, Prince d'Ysembourg," she said, assuming the airs of a Dorine. "One morning, one of the most beplumed countesses of the Imperial court came to

the house and wanted to speak to the marshal privately. I put myself in the way of hearing what she said. She burst into tears and confided to that booby of a marshal — yes, the Condé of the Republic is a booby! — that her husband, who served under him in Spain, had left her without means, and if she did n't get a thousand francs, or two thousand, that day her children must go without food; she had n't any for the morrow. The marshal, who was always ready to give in those days, took two notes of a thousand francs each out of his desk, and gave them to her. I saw that fine countess going down the staircase where she could n't see me. She was laughing with a satisfaction that certainly was n't motherly, so I slipped after her to the peristyle where I heard her say to the coachman, 'To Leroy's.' I ran round quickly to Leroy's, and there, sure enough, was the poor mother. I got there in time to see her order and pay for a fifteen-hundred-franc dress; you understand that in those days people were made to pay when they bought. The next day but one she appeared at an ambassador's ball, dressed to please all the world and some one in particular. That day I said to myself: 'I've got a career! When I'm no longer young I'll lend money to great ladies on their finery; for passion never calculates, it pays blindly.' If you want subjects for a vaudeville I can sell you plenty."

She departed after delivering this tirade, in which all the phases of her past life were outlined, leaving Gazonal as much horrified by her revelations as by the five yellow teeth she showed when she tried to smile.

"What shall we do now?" he asked presently.

"Make notes," replied Bixiou, whistling for his porter; "for I want some money, and I'll show you the use of porters. You think they only pull the gate-cord; whereas they really pull poor devils like me and artists whom they take under their protection out of difficulties. Mine will get the Montyon prize one of these days."

Gazonal opened his eyes to their utmost roundness.

A man between two ages, partly a graybeard, partly an office-boy, but more oily within and without, hair greasy, stomach puffy, skin dull and moist, like that of the prior of a convent, always wearing list shoes, a blue coat, and grayish trousers, made his appearance.

"What is it, monsieur?" he said with an air which combined that of a protector and a subordinate.

"Ravenouillet — His name is Ravenouillet," said Bixiou turning to Gazonal. "Have you our notebook of bills due with you?"

Ravenouillet pulled out of his pocket the greasiest and stickiest book that Gazonal's eyes had ever beheld.

"Write down at three months' sight two notes of five hundred francs each, which you will proceed to sign."

And Bixiou handed over two notes already drawn to his order by Ravenouillet, which Ravenouillet immediately signed and inscribed on the greasy book, in which his wife also kept account of the debts of the other lodgers.

"Thanks, Ravenouillet," said Bixiou. "And here's a box at the Vaudeville for you."

"Oh! my daughter will enjoy that," said Ravenouillet, departing.

"There are seventy-one tenants in this house," said Bixiou, "and the average of what they owe Ravenouillet is six thousand francs a month, eighteen thousand quarterly for money advanced, postage, etc., not counting the rents due. He is Providence — at thirty per cent, which we all pay him, though he never asks for anything."

"Oh, Paris! Paris!" cried Gazonal.

"I'm going to take you now, cousin Gazonal," said Bixiou, after indorsing the notes, "to see another comedian, who will play you a charming scene gratis."

"Who is it?" said Gazonal.

"A usurer. As we go along I'll tell you the début of friend Ravenouillet in Paris."

Passing in front of the porter's lodge, Gazonal

saw Mademoiselle Lucienne Ravenouillet holding in her hand a music score (she was a pupil of the Conservatoire), her father reading a newspaper, and Madame Ravenouillet with a package of letters to be carried up to the lodgers.

"Thanks, Monsieur Bixiou!" said the girl.

"She's not a rat," explained Léon to his cousin; "she is the larva of the grasshopper."

"Here's the history of Ravenouillet," continued Bixiou, when the three friends reached the boulevard.

"In 1831 Massol, the counsellor of state who is dealing with your case, was a lawyer-journalist who at that time never thought of being more than Keeper of the Seals, and deigned to leave King Louis-Philippe on his throne. Forgive his ambition, he's from Carcassonne. One morning there entered to him a young rustic of his parts, who said: 'You know me very well, Mossoo Massol; I'm your neighbor the grocer's little boy; I've come from down there, for they tell me a fellow is certain to get a place if he comes to Paris.' Hearing these words, Massol shuddered, and said to himself that if he were weak enough to help this compatriot (to him utterly unknown) he should have the whole department prone upon him, his bell-rope would break, his valet leave him, he should have difficulties with his landlord about the stairway, and the other lodgers would assuredly complain of the smell of

garlic pervading the house. Consequently, he looked at his visitor as a butcher looks at a sheep whose throat he intends to cut. But whether the rustic comprehended the stab of that glance or not, he went on to say (so Massol told me), 'I've as much ambition as other men. I will never go back to my native place, if I ever do go back, unless I am a rich man. Paris is the antechamber of Paradise. They tell me that you who write the newspapers can make, as they say, "fine weather and foul;" that is, you have things all your own way, and it's enough to ask your help to get any place, no matter what, under government. Now, though I have faculties, like others, I know myself: I have no education; I don't know how to write, and that's a misfortune, for I have ideas. I am not seeking, therefore, to be your rival; I judge myself, and I know I could n't succeed there. But, as you are so powerful, and as we are almost brothers, having played together in childhood, I count upon you to launch me in a career and to protect me — Oh, you *must*; I want a place; a place suitable to my capacity, to such as I am, a place where I can make my fortune.' Massol was just about to put his compatriot neck and crop out of the door with some brutal speech, when the rustic ended his appeal thus: 'I don't ask to enter the administration where people advance like tortoises — there's your cousin, who has

stuck in one post for twenty years. No, I only want to make my *début*.' — 'On the stage?' asked Massol only too happy at that conclusion. — 'No; though I have gesture enough, and figure, and memory. But there's too much wear and tear; I prefer the career of *porter*.' Massol kept his countenance, and replied: 'I think there's more wear and tear in that, but as your choice is made I'll see what I can do;' and he got him, as Ravenouillet says, his first *cordon*."

"I was the first master," said Léon, "to consider the race of *porter*. You'll find knaves of morality, mountebanks of vanity, modern sycophants, *septembriseurs*, disguised in philanthropy, inventors of palpitating questions, preaching the emancipation of the negroes, improvement of little thieves, benevolence to liberated convicts, and who, nevertheless, leave their porters in a condition worse than that of the Irish, in holes more dreadful than a mud cabin, and pay them less money to live on than the State pays to support a convict. I have done but one good action in my life, and that was to build my *porter* a decent lodge."

"Yes," said Bixiou, "if a man, having built a great cage divided into thousands of compartments like the cells of a beehive or the dens of a menagerie, constructed to receive human beings of all trades and all kinds, if that animal, calling itself the proprietor, should go to a man of science and say: 'I want an

individual of the bimanous species, able to live in holes full of old boots, pestiferous with rags, and ten feet square; I want him such that he can live there all his life, sleep there, eat there, be happy, get children as pretty as little cupids, work, toil, cultivate flowers, sing there, stay there, and live in darkness but see and know everything," most assuredly the man of science could never have invented the porter to oblige the proprietor; Paris, and Paris only could create him, or, if you choose, the devil."

"Parisian creative powers have gone farther than that," said Gazonal; "look at the workmen! You don't know all the products of industry, though you exhibit them. Our toilers fight against the toilers of the continent by force of misery, as Napoleon fought Europe by force of regiments."

"Here we are, at my friend the usurer's," said Bixiou. "His name is Vauvinet. One of the greatest mistakes made by writers who describe our manners and morals is to harp on old portraits. In these days all trades change. The grocer becomes a peer of France, artists capitalize their money, vaudevillists have incomes. A few rare beings may remain what they originally were, but professions in general have no longer either their special costume or their formerly fixed habits and ways. In the past we had Gobseck, Gigonnet, Samonon,—the last of the Romans; to-day

we rejoice in Vauvinet, the good-fellow usurer, the dandy who frequents the greenroom and the lorettes, and drives about in a little coupé with one horse. Take special note of my man, friend Gazonal, and you'll see the comedy of money, the cold man who won't give a penny, the hot man who snuffs a profit; listen to him attentively!"

All three went up to the second floor of a fine-looking house on the boulevard des Italiens, where they found themselves surrounded by the elegances then in fashion. A young man about twenty-eight years of age advanced to meet them with a smiling face, for he saw Léon de Lora first. Vauvinet held out his hand with apparent friendliness to Bixiou, and bowed coldly to Gazonal as he motioned them to enter his office, where bourgeois taste was visible beneath the artistic appearance of the furniture, and in spite of the statuettes and the thousand other little trifles applied to our little apartments by modern art, which has made itself as small as its patrons.

Vauvinet was dressed, like other young men of our day who go into business, with extreme elegance, which many of them regard as a species of prospectus.

"I've come for some money," said Bixiou, laughing, and presenting his notes.

Vauvinet assumed a serious air, which made Gazonal smile, such difference was there between the

smiling visage that received them and the countenance of the money-lender recalled to business.

"My dear fellow," said Vauvinet, looking at Bixiou, "I should certainly oblige you with the greatest pleasure, but I have n't any money to loan at the present time."

"Ah, bah!"

"No; I have given all I had to — you know who. That poor Lousteau went into partnership for the management of a theatre with an old vaudevillist who has great influence with the ministry, Ridal; and they came to me yesterday for thirty thousand francs. I'm cleaned out, and so completely that I was just in the act of sending to Cérizet for a hundred louis, which I lost at *lansquenet* this morning, at Jenny Cadine's."

"You must indeed be hard-up if you can't oblige this poor Bixiou," said Léon de Lora; "for he can be very sharp-tongued when he has n't a sou."

"Well," said Bixiou, "I never could say anything but good of Vauvinet; he's full of goods."

"My dear friend," said Vauvinet, "if I had the money, I could n't possibly discount, even at fifty per cent, notes which are drawn by your porter. Ravenouillet's paper is n't in demand. He's not a Rothschild. I warn you that his notes are worn thin; you had better invent another firm. Find an uncle.

As for a friend who'll sign notes for us there's no such being to be found; the matter-of-factness of the present age is making awful progress."

"I have a friend," said Bixiou, motioning to Léon's cousin. "Monsieur here; one of the most distinguished manufacturers of cloth in the South, named Gazonal. His hair is not very well dressed," added Bixiou, looking at the touzled and luxuriant crop on the provincial's head, "but I am going to take him to Marius, who will make him look less like a poodle-dog, an appearance so injurious to his credit, and to ours."

"I don't believe in Southern securities, be it said without offence to monsieur," replied Vauvinet, with whom Gazonal was so entertained that he did not resent his insolence.

Gazonal, that extremely penetrating intellect, thought that the painter and Bixiou intended, by way of teaching him to know Paris, to make him pay the thousand francs for his breakfast at the Café de Paris, for this son of the Pyrenees had never got out of that armor of distrust which incloses the provincial in Paris.

"How can you expect me to have outstanding business at seven hundred miles from Paris?" added Vauvinet.

"Then you refuse me positively?" asked Bixiou.

"I have twenty francs, and no more," said the young usurer.

"I'm sorry for you," said the joker. "I thought I was worth a thousand francs."

"You are worth two hundred thousand francs," replied Vauvinet, "and sometimes you are worth your weight in gold, or at least your tongue is; but I tell you I have n't a penny."

"Very good," replied Bixiou; "then we won't say anything more about it. I had arranged for this evening, at Carabine's, the thing you most wanted—you know?"

Vauvinet winked an eye at Bixiou; the wink that two jockeys give each other when they want to say: "Don't try trickery."

"Don't you remember catching me round the waist as if I were a pretty woman," said Bixiou, "and coaxing me with look and speech, and saying, 'I'll do anything for you if you'll only get me shares at par in that railroad du Tillet and Nucingen have made an offer for?' Well, old fellow, du Tillet and Nucingen are coming to Carabine's to-night, where they will meet a number of political characters. You've lost a fine opportunity. Good-bye to you, old carrot."

Bixiou rose, leaving Vauvinet apparently indifferent, but inwardly annoyed by the sense that he had committed a folly.

"One moment, my dear fellow," said the money-lender. "Though I have n't the money, I have credit.

If your notes are worth nothing, I can keep them and give you notes in exchange. If we can come to an agreement about that railway stock we could share the profits, of course in due proportion and I'll allow you that on —"

"No, no," said Bixiou, "I want money in hand, and I must get those notes of Ravenouillet's cashed."

"Ravenouillet is sound," said Vauvinet. "He puts money into the savings-bank; he is good security."

"Better than you," interposed Léon, "for *he* does n't stipend lorettes; he has n't any rent to pay; and he never rushes into speculations which keep him dreading either a rise or fall."

"You think you can laugh at me, great man," returned Vauvinet, once more jovial and caressing; "you've turned La Fontaine's fable of 'Le Chêne et le Roseau' into an elixir — Come, Gubetta, my old accomplice," he continued, seizing Bixiou round the waist, "you want money; well, I can borrow three thousand francs from my friend Cérizet instead of two; 'Let us be friends, Cinna!' hand over your colossal cabbages, — made to trick the public like a gardener's catalogue. If I refused you it was because it is pretty hard on a man who can only do his poor little business by turning over his money, to have to keep your Ravenouillet notes in the drawer of his desk. Hard, hard, very hard!"

"What discount do you want?" asked Bixiou.

"Next to nothing," returned Vauvinet. "It will cost you a miserable fifty francs at the end of the quarter."

"As Émile Blondet used to say, you shall be my benefactor," replied Bixiou.

"Twenty per cent!" whispered Gazonal to Bixiou, who replied by a punch of his elbow in the provincial's œsophagus.

"Bless me!" said Vauvinet opening a drawer in his desk as if to put away the Ravenouillet notes, "here's an old bill of five hundred francs stuck in the drawer! I didn't know I was so rich. And here's a note payable at the end of the month for four hundred and fifty; Cérizet will take it without much diminution, and there's your sum in hand. But no nonsense, Bixiou! Hein? to-night, at Carabine's, will you swear to me —"

"Haven't we re-friended?" said Bixiou, pocketing the five-hundred-franc bill and the note for four hundred and fifty. "I give you my word of honor that you shall see du Tillet, and many other men who want to make their way — their railway — to-night at Carabine's."

Vauvinet conducted the three friends to the landing of the staircase, cajoling Bixiou on the way. Bixiou kept a grave face till he reached the outer door, listen-

ing to Gazonal, who tried to enlighten him on his late operation, and to prove to him that if Vauvinet's follower, Cérizet, took another twenty francs out of his four hundred and fifty, he was getting money at forty per cent.

When they reached the asphalt Bixiou frightened Gazonal by the laugh of a Parisian hoaxer, — that cold, mute laugh, a sort of labial north wind.

"The assignment of the contract for that railway is adjourned, positively, by the Chamber; I heard this yesterday from that *marcheuse* whom we smiled at just now. If I win five or six thousand francs at *lansquenet* to-night, why should I grudge sixty-five francs for the power to *stake*, hey?"

"*Lansquenet* is another of the thousand facets of Paris as it is," said Léon. "And therefore, cousin, I intend to present you to-night in the salon of a duchess, — a duchess of the rue Saint-Georges, where you will see the aristocracy of the lorettes, and probably be able to win your lawsuit. But it is quite impossible to present you anywhere with that mop of Pyrenean hair; you look like a porcupine; and therefore we'll take you close by, Place de la Bourse, to Marius, another of our comedians —"

"Who is he?"

"I'll tell you his tale," said Bixiou. "In the year 1800 a Toulousian named Cabot, a young wig-maker

devoured by ambition, came to Paris, and set up a shop (I use your slang). This man of genius, — he now has an income of twenty-four thousand francs a year, and lives, retired from business, at Libourne, — well, he saw that so vulgar and ignoble a name as Cabot could never attain celebrity. Monsieur de Paruy, whose hair he cut, gave him the name of Marius, infinitely superior, you perceive, to the Christian names of Armand and Hippolyte, behind which patronymies attacked by the Cabot evil are wont to hide. All the successors of Cabot have called themselves Marius. The present Marius is Marius V.; his real name is Mongin. This occurs in various other trades; for 'Botot water,' and for 'Little-Virtue' ink. Names become commercial property in Paris, and have ended by constituting a sort of ensign of nobility. The present Marius, who takes pupils, has created, he says, the leading school of hair-dressing in the world."

"I've seen, in coming through France," said Gazonal, "a great many signs bearing the words: 'Such a one, pupil of Marius.'"

"His pupils have to wash their hands after every head," said Bixiou; "but Marius does not take them indifferently; they must have nice hands, and not be ill-looking. The most remarkable for manners, appearance, and elocution are sent out to dress heads;

and they come back tired to death. Marius himself never turns out except for titled women; he drives his cabriolet and has a groom."

"But, after all, he is nothing but a barber!" cried Gazonal, somewhat shocked.

"Barber!" exclaimed Bixiou; "please remember that he is captain in the National Guard, and is decorated for being the first to spring into a barricade in 1832."

"And take care what you say to him: he is neither barber, hair-dresser, nor wig-maker; he is a director of salons for hair-dressing," said Léon, as they went up a staircase with crystal balusters and mahogany rail, the steps of which were covered with a sumptuous carpet.

"*Ah ça!* mind you don't compromise us," said Bixiou. "In the antechamber you'll see lacqueys who will take off your coat, and seize your hat, to brush them; and they'll accompany you to the door of the salons to open and shut it. I mention this, friend Gazonal," added Bixiou, slyly, "lest you might think they were after your property, and cry 'Stop thief!'"

"These salons," said Léon, "are three boudoirs where the director has collected all the inventions of modern luxury: lambrequins to the windows, jardinières everywhere, downy divans where each customer

can wait his turn and read the newspapers. You might suppose, when you first go in, that five francs would be the least they'd get out of your waistcoat pocket; but nothing is ever extracted beyond ten sous for combing and frizzing your hair, or twenty sous for cutting and frizzing. Elegant dressing-tables stand about among the jardinières; water is laid on to the washstands; enormous mirrors reproduce the whole figure. Therefore don't look astonished. When the *client* (that's the elegant word substituted by Marius for the ignoble word *customer*), — when the client appears at the door, Marius gives him a glance which appraises him: to Marius you are a *head*, more or less susceptible of occupying his mind. To him there's no mankind; there are only heads."

"We let you hear Marius on all the notes of his scale," said Bixiou, "and you know how to follow our lead."

As soon as Gazonal showed himself, the glance was given, and was evidently favorable, for Marius exclaimed: "Regulus! yours this head! Prepare it first with the little scissors."

"Excuse me," said Gazonal to the pupil, at a sign from Bixiou. "I prefer to have my head dressed by Monsieur Marius himself."

Marius, much flattered by this demand, advanced, leaving the head on which he was engaged.

"I am with you in a moment; I am just finishing. Pray have no uneasiness, my pupil will prepare you; I alone will decide the cut."

Marius, a slim little man, his hair frizzed like that of Rubini, and jet black, dressed also in black, with long white cuffs, and the frill of his shirt adorned with a diamond, now saw Bixiou, to whom he bowed as to a power the equal of his own.

"That is only an ordinary head," he said to Léon, pointing to the person on whom he was operating, — "a grocer, or something of that kind. But if we devoted ourselves to art only, we should die in Bicêtre, mad!" and he turned back with an inimitable gesture to his client, after saying to Regulus, "Prepare monsieur, he is evidently an artist."

"A journalist," said Bixiou.

Hearing that word, Marius gave two or three strokes of the comb to the ordinary head and flung himself upon Gazonal, taking Regulus by the arm at the instant that the pupil was about to begin the operation of the little scissors.

"I will take charge of monsieur. Look, monsieur," he said to the grocer, "reflect yourself in the great mirror — if the mirror permits. Ossian!"

A lacquey entered, and took hold of the client to dress him.

"You pay at the desk, monsieur," said Marius

to the stupefied grocer, who was pulling out his purse.

"Is there any use, my dear fellow," said Bixiou, "in going through this operation of the little scissors?"

"No head ever comes to me uncleaned," replied the illustrious hair-dresser; "but for your sake, I will do that of monsieur myself, wholly. My pupils sketch out the scheme, or my strength would not hold out. Every one says as you do: 'Dressed by Marius!' Therefore, I can give only the finishing strokes. What journal is monsieur on?"

"If I were you, I should keep three or four Mariuses," said Gazonal.

"Ah! monsieur, I see, is a feuilletonist," said Marius. "Alas! in dressing heads which expose us to notice it is impossible. Excuse me!"

He left Gazonal to overlook Regulus, who was "preparing" a newly arrived head. Tapping his tongue against his palate, he made a disapproving noise, which may perhaps be written down as "titt, titt, titt."

"There, there! good heavens! that cut is not square; your scissors are hacking it. Here! see there! Regulus, you are not clipping poodles; these are men — who have a character; if you continue to look at the ceiling instead of looking only between the glass and the head, you will dishonor my house."

"You are stern, Monsieur Marius."

"I owe them the secrets of my art."

"Then it is an art?" said Gazonal.

Marius, affronted, looked at Gazonal in the glass, and stopped short, the scissors in one hand, the comb in the other.

"Monsieur, you speak like a — child! and yet, from your accent, I judge you are from the South, the birth-place of men of genius."

"Yes, I know that hair-dressing requires some taste," replied Gazonal.

"Hush, monsieur, hush! I expected better things of *you*. Let me tell you that a hair-dresser, — I don't say a good hair-dresser, for a man is, or he is not, a hair-dresser, — a hair-dresser, I repeat, is more difficult to find than — what shall I say? than — I don't know what — a minister? — (Sit still!) No, for you can't judge by ministers, the streets are full of them. A Paganini? No, he's not great enough. A hair-dresser, monsieur, a man who divines your soul and your habits, in order to dress your hair conformably with your being, that man has all that constitutes a philosopher — and such he is. See the women! Women appreciate us; they know our value; our value to them is the conquest they make when they have placed their heads in our hands to attain a triumph. I say to you that a hair-dresser — the world does not know what he is. I who speak to you, I am very

nearly all that there is of — without boasting I may say I am known — Still, I think more might be done — The execution, that is everything! Ah! if women would only give me *carte blanche*! — if I might only execute the ideas that come to me! I have, you see, a hell of imagination! — but the women don't fall in with it; they have their own plans; they'll stick their fingers or combs, as soon as my back is turned, through the most delicious edifices — which ought to be engraved and perpetuated; for our works, *monsieur*, last unfortunately but a few hours. A great hair-dresser, hey! he's like Carême and Vestris in their careers. (Head a little this way, if you please, *so*; I attend particularly to front faces!) Our profession is ruined by bunglers who understand neither the epoch nor their art. There are dealers in wigs and essences who are enough to make one's hair stand on end; they care only to sell you bottles. It is pitiable! But that's business. Such poor wretches cut hair and dress it as they can. I, when I arrived in Paris from Toulouse, my ambition was to succeed the great Marius, to be a true Marius, to make that name illustrious. I alone, more than all the four others, I said to myself, 'I will conquer, or die.' (There! now sit straight, I am going to finish you.) I was the first to introduce *elegance*; I made my salons the object of curiosity. I disdain advertisements; what advertisements would

have cost, monsieur, I put into elegance, charm, comfort. Next year I shall have a quartette in one of the salons to discourse music, and of the best. Yes, we ought to charm away the ennui of those whose heads we dress. I do not conceal from myself the annoyances to a client. (Look at yourself!) To have one's hair dressed is fatiguing, perhaps as much so as posing for one's portrait. Monsieur knows perhaps that the famous Monsieur Humboldt (I did the best I could with the few hairs America left him — science has this in common with savages, that she scalps her men clean), that illustrious *savant*, said that next to the suffering of going to be hanged was that of going to be painted; but I place the trial of having your head dressed before that of being painted, and so do certain women. Well, monsieur, my object is to make those who come here to have their hair cut or frizzed enjoy themselves. (Hold still, you have a tuft which *must* be conquered.) A Jew proposed to supply me with Italian cantatrices who, during the interludes, were to depilate the young men of forty; but they proved to be girls from the Conservatoire, and music-teachers from the Rue Montmartre. There you are, monsieur; your head is dressed as that of a man of talent ought to be. Ossian," he said to the lacquey in livery, "dress monsieur and show him out. Whose turn next?" he added proudly, gazing round upon the persons who awaited him.

"Don't laugh, Gazonal," said Léon as they reached the foot of the staircase, whence his eye could take in the whole of the Place de la Bourse. "I see over there one of our great men, and you shall compare his language with that of the barber, and tell me which of the two you think the most original."

"Don't laugh, Gazonal," said Bixiou, mimicking Léon's intonation. "What do you suppose is Marius's business?"

"Hair-dressing."

"He has obtained a monopoly of the sale of hair in bulk, as a certain dealer in comestibles who is going to sell us a *pâté* for three francs has acquired a monopoly of the sale of truffles; he discounts the paper of that business; he loans money on pawn to clients when embarrassed; he gives annuities on lives; he gambles at the Bourse; he is a stockholder in all the fashion papers; and he sells, under the name of a certain chemist, an infamous drug which, for his share alone, gives him an income of thirty thousand francs, and costs in advertisements a hundred thousand yearly."

"Is it possible!" cried Gazonal.

"Remember this," said Bixiou, gravely. "In Paris there is no such thing as a small business; all things swell to large proportions, down to the sale of rags and matches. The lemonade-seller who, with his napkin under his arm, meets you as you enter his

shop, may be worth his fifty thousand francs a year; the waiter in a restaurant is eligible for the Chamber; the man you take for a beggar in the street carries a hundred thousand francs worth of unset diamonds in his waistcoat pocket, and did n't steal them either."

The three inseparables (for one day at any rate) now crossed the Place de la Bourse in a way to intercept a man about forty years of age, wearing the Legion of honor, who was coming from the boulevard by way of the rue Neuve-Vivienne.

"Hey!" said Léon, "what are you pondering over, my dear Dubourdieu? Some fine symbolic composition? My dear cousin, I have the pleasure to present to you our illustrious painter Dubourdieu, not less celebrated for his humanitarian convictions than for his talents in art. Dubourdieu, my cousin Palafox."

Dubourdieu, a small, pale man with melancholy blue eyes, bowed slightly to Gazonal, who bent low as before a man of genius.

"So you have elected Stidmann in place of —" he began.

"How could I help it? I was n't there," replied Lora.

"You bring the Academy into disrepute," continued the painter. "To choose such a man as that! I don't wish to say ill of him, but he works at a trade. Where are you dragging the first of arts, — the art whose

works are the most lasting; bringing nations to light of which the world has long lost even the memory; an art which crowns and consecrates great men? Yes, sculpture is priesthood; it preserves the ideas of an epoch, and you give its chair to a maker of toys and mantelpieces, an ornamentationist, a seller of bric-à-brac! Ah! as Chamfort said, one has to swallow a viper every morning to endure the life of Paris. Well, at any rate, Art remains to a few of us; they can't prevent us from cultivating it —"

"And besides, my dear fellow, you have a consolation which few artists possess; the future is yours," said Bixiou. "When the world is converted to our doctrine, you will be at the head of your art; for you are putting into it ideas which people will understand — *when* they are generalized! In fifty years from now you'll be to all the world what you are to a few of us at this moment, — a great man. The only question is how to get along till then."

"I have just finished," resumed the great artist, his face expanding like that of a man whose hobby is stroked, "an allegorical figure of Harmony; and if you will come and see it, you will understand why it should have taken me two years to paint it. Everything is in it! At the first glance one divines the destiny of the globe. A queen holds a shepherd's crook in her hand, — symbolical of the advancement of the races

useful to mankind; she wears on her head the cap of Liberty; her breasts are sixfold, as the Egyptians carved them—for the Egyptians foresaw Fourier; her feet are resting on two clasped hands which embrace a globe,—symbol of the brotherhood of all human races; she tramples cannon under foot to signify the abolition of war; and I have tried to make her face express the serenity of triumphant agriculture. I have also placed beside her an enormous curled cabbage, which, according to our master, is an image of Harmony. Ah! it is not the least among Fourier's titles to veneration that he has restored the gift of thought to plants; he has bound all creation in one by the signification of things to one another, and by their special language. A hundred years hence this earth will be much larger than it is now."

"And how will that, monsieur, come to pass?" said Gazonal, stupefied at hearing a man outside of a lunatic asylum talk in this way.

"Through the extending of production. If men will apply THE SYSTEM, it will not be impossible to act upon the stars."

"What would become of painting in that case?" asked Gazonal.

"It would be magnified."

"Would our eyes be magnified too?" said Gazonal, looking at his two friends significantly.

"Man will return to what he was before he became degenerate; our six-foot men will then be dwarfs."

"Is your picture finished?" asked Léon.

"Entirely finished," replied Dubourdieu. "I have tried to see Hiclar, and get him to compose a symphony for it; I wish that while viewing my picture the public should hear music *à la* Beethoven to develop its ideas and bring them within range of the intellect by two arts. Ah! if the government would only lend me one of the galleries of the Louvre!"

"I'll mention it, if you want me to do so; you should never neglect an opportunity to strike minds."

"Ah! my friends are preparing articles; but I am afraid they'll go too far."

"Pooh!" said Bixiou, "they can't go as far as the future."

Dubourdieu looked askance at Bixiou, and continued his way.

"Why, he's mad," said Gazonal; "he is following the moon in her courses."

"His skill is masterly," said Léon, "and he knows his art, but Fourierism has killed him. You have just seen, cousin, one of the effects of ambition upon artists. Too often, in Paris, from a desire to reach more rapidly than by natural ways the celebrity which to them is fortune, artists borrow the wings of circumstance; they think they make themselves of more im-

portance as men of a specialty, the supporters of some 'system;' and they fancy they can transform a clique into the public. One is a republican, another Saint-Simonian; this one aristocrat, that one Catholic, others *juste-milieu*, middle ages, or German, as they choose for their purpose. Now, though opinions do not give talent, they always spoil what talent there is, and the poor fellow whom you have just seen is a proof thereof. An artist's opinion ought to be: Faith in his art, in his work; and his only way of success is toil when nature has given him the sacred fire."

"Let us get away," said Bixiou. "Léon is beginning to moralize."

"But that man was sincere," said Gazonal, still stupefied.

"Perfectly sincere," replied Bixiou; "as sincere as the king of barbers just now."

"He is mad!" repeated Gazonal.

"And he is not the first man driven mad by Fourier's ideas," said Bixiou. "You don't know anything about Paris. Ask it for a hundred thousand francs to realize an idea that will be useful to humanity, — the steam-engine for instance, — and you'll die, like Salomon de Caux, at Bicêtre; but if the money is wanted for some paradoxical absurdity, Parisians will annihilate themselves and their fortune for it. It is the same with systems as it is with material things.

Utterly impracticable newspapers have consumed millions within the last fifteen years. What makes your lawsuit so hard to win, is that you have right on your side, and on that of the prefect there are (so you suppose) secret motives."

"Do you think that a man of intellect having once understood the nature of Paris could live elsewhere?" said Léon to his cousin.

"Suppose we take Gazonal to old Mère Fontaine?" said Bixiou, making a sign to the driver of a *citadine* to draw up; "it will be a step from the real to the fantastic. Driver, Vieille rue du Temple."

And all three were presently rolling in the direction of the Marais.

"What are you taking me to see now?" asked Gazonal.

"The proof of what Bixiou told you," replied Léon; "we shall show you a woman who makes twenty thousand francs a year by working a fantastic idea."

"A fortune-teller," said Bixiou, interpreting the look of the Southerner as a question. "Madame Fontaine is thought, by those who seek to pry into the future, to be wiser in her wisdom than Mademoiselle Lenormand."

"She must be very rich," remarked Gazonal.

"She was the victim of her own idea, as long as lotteries existed," said Bixiou; "for in Paris there are

no great gains without corresponding outlays. The strongest heads are liable to crack there, as if to give vent to their steam. Those who make much money have vices or fancies, — no doubt to establish an equilibrium."

"And now that the lottery is abolished?" asked Gazonal.

"Oh! now she has a nephew for whom she is hoarding."

When they reached the *Vieille rue du Temple* the three friends entered one of the oldest houses in that street and passed up a shaking staircase, the steps of which, caked with mud, led them in semi-darkness, and through a stench peculiar to houses on an alley, to the third story, where they beheld a door which painting alone could render; literature would have to spend too many nights in suitably describing it.

An old woman, in keeping with that door, and who might have been that door in human guise, ushered the three friends into a room which served as an ante-chamber, where, in spite of the warm atmosphere which fills the streets of Paris, they felt the icy chill of crypts about them. A damp air came from an inner courtyard which resembled a huge air-shaft; the light that entered was gray, and the sill of the window was filled with pots of sickly plants. In this room, which had a coating of some greasy, fuliginous substance,

the furniture, the chairs, the table, were all most abject. The floor tiles oozed like a water-cooler. In short, every accessory was in keeping with the fearful old woman of the hooked nose, ghastly face, and decent rags who directed the "consulters" to sit down, informing them that only one at a time could be admitted to MADAME.

Gazonal, who played the intrepid, entered bravely, and found himself in presence of one of those women forgotten by Death, who no doubt forgets them intentionally in order to leave some samples of Itself among the living. He saw before him a withered face in which shone fixed gray eyes of wearying immobility; a flattened nose, smeared with snuff; knuckle-bones well set up by muscles that, under pretence of being hands, played nonchalantly with a pack of cards, like some machine the movement of which is about to run down. The body, a species of broom-handle decently covered with clothes, enjoyed the advantages of death and did not stir. Above the forehead rose a coil of black velvet. Madame Fontaine, for it was really a woman, had a black hen on her right hand and a huge toad, named Astaroth, on her left. Gazonal did not at first perceive them.

The toad, of surprising dimensions, was less alarming in himself than through the effect of two topaz eyes, large as a ten-sous piece, which cast forth vivid

gleams. It was impossible to endure that look. The toad is a creature as yet unexplained. Perhaps the whole animal creation, including man, is comprised in it; for, as Lassailly said, the toad exists indefinitely; and, as we know, it is of all created animals the one whose marriage lasts the longest.

The black hen had a cage about two feet distant from the table, covered with a green cloth, to which she came along a plank which formed a sort of draw-bridge between the cage and the table.

When the woman, the least real of the creatures in this Hoffmannesque den, said to Gazonal: "Cut!" the worthy provincial shuddered involuntarily. That which renders these beings so formidable is the importance of what we want to know. People go to them, as they know very well, to buy hope.

The den of the sibyl was much darker than the ante-chamber; the color of the walls could scarcely be distinguished. The ceiling, blackened by smoke, far from reflecting the little light that came from a window obstructed by pale and sickly vegetations, absorbed the greater part of it; but the table where the sorceress sat received what there was of this half-light fully. The table, the chair of the woman, and that on which Gazonal was seated, formed the entire furniture of the little room, which was divided at one end by a sort of loft where Madame Fontaine probably slept. Gazonal

heard through a half-opened door the bubbling murmur of a soup-pot. That kitchen sound, accompanied by a composite odor in which the effluvia of a sink predominated, mingled incongruous ideas of the necessities of actual life with those of supernatural power. Disgust entered into curiosity.

Gazonal observed one stair of pine wood, the lowest no doubt of the staircase which led to the loft. He took in these minor details at a glance, with a sense of nausea. It was all quite otherwise alarming than the romantic tales and scenes of German drama lead one to expect; here was suffocating actuality. The air diffused a sort of dizzy heaviness, the dim light rasped the nerves. When the Southerner, impelled by a species of self-assertion, gazed firmly at the toad, he felt a sort of emetic heat at the pit of his stomach, and was conscious of a terror like that a criminal might feel in presence of a gendarme. He endeavored to brace himself by looking at Madame Fontaine; but there he encountered two almost white eyes, the motionless and icy pupils of which were absolutely intolerable to him. The silence became terrifying.

"Which do you wish, monsieur, the five-franc fortune, the ten-franc fortune, or the grand game?"

"The five-franc fortune is dear enough," replied the Southerner, making powerful efforts not to yield to the influence of the surroundings in which he found himself.

At the moment when Gazonal was thus endeavoring to collect himself, a voice — an infernal voice — made him bound in his chair; the black hen clucked.

"Go back, my daughter, go back; monsieur chooses to spend only five francs."

The hen seemed to understand her mistress, for, after coming within a foot of the cards, she turned and resumed her former place.

"What flower do you like best?" asked the old woman, in a voice hoarsened by the phlegm which seemed to rise and fall incessantly in her bronchial tubes.

"The rose."

"What color are you fond of?"

"Blue."

"What animal do you prefer?"

"The horse. Why these questions?" he asked.

"Man derives his form from his anterior states," she said sententiously. "Hence his instincts; and his instincts rule his destiny. What food do you like best to eat, — fish, game, cereals, butcher's meat; sweet things, vegetables, or fruits?"

"Game."

"In what month were you born?"

"September."

"Put out your hand."

Madame Fontaine looked attentively at the lines of

the hand that was shown to her. It was all done seriously, with no pretence of sorcery; on the contrary, with the simplicity a notary might have shown when asking the intentions of a client about a deed. Presently she shuffled the cards, and asked Gazonal to cut them, and then to make three packs of them himself. After which she took the packs, spread them out before her, and examined them as a gambler examines the thirty-six numbers at roulette before he risks his stake. Gazonal's bones were freezing; he seemed not to know where he was; but his amazement grew greater and greater when this hideous old woman in a green bonnet, stout and squat, whose false front was frizzed into points of interrogation, proceeded, in a thick voice, to relate to him all the particular circumstances, even the most secret, of his past life: she told him his tastes, his habits, his character; the thoughts of his childhood; everything that had influenced his life; a marriage broken off, why, with whom, the exact description of the woman he had loved; and, finally, the place he came from, his lawsuit, etc.

Gazonal at first thought it a hoax prepared by his companions; but the absolute impossibility of such a conspiracy appeared to him almost as soon as the idea itself, and he sat speechless before that truly infernal power, the incarnation of which borrowed from humanity a form which the imagination of painters and poets

has throughout all ages regarded as the most awful of created things, — namely, a toothless, hideous, wheezing hag, with cold lips, flattened nose, and whitish eyes. The pupils of those eyes had brightened, through them gushed a ray, — was it from the depths of the future or from hell?

Gazonal asked, interrupting the old creature, of what use the toad and the hen were to her.

"They predict the future. The *consulter* himself throws grain upon the cards; Bilouche comes and pecks it. Astaroth crawls over the cards to get the food the client holds for him, and those two wonderful intelligences are never mistaken. Will you see them at work? — you will then know your future. The cost is a hundred francs."

Gazonal, horrified by the gaze of Astaroth, rushed into the antechamber, after bowing to the terrible old woman. He was moist from head to foot, as if under the incubation of some evil spirit.

"Let us get away!" he said to the two artists. "Did you ever consult that sorceress?"

"I never do anything important without getting Astaroth's opinion," said Léon, "and I am always the better for it."

"I'm expecting the virtuous fortune which Bilouche has promised me," said Bixiou.

"I've a fever," cried Gazonal. "If I believed

what you say I should have to believe in sorcery, in some supernatural power."

"It may be only natural," said Bixiou. "One-third of all the lorettes, one-fourth of all the statesmen, and one-half of all artists consult Madame Fontaine; and I know a minister to whom she is an Egeria."

"Did she tell you your future?" asked Léon.

"No; I had enough of her about my past. But," added Gazonal, struck by a sudden thought, "if she can, by the help of those dreadful collaborators, predict the future, how came she to lose in the lottery?"

"Ah! you put your finger on one of the greatest mysteries of occult science," replied Léon. "The moment that the species of inward mirror on which the past or the future is reflected to their minds becomes clouded by the breath of a personal feeling, by an idea foreign to the purpose of the power they are exerting, sorcerers and sorceresses can see nothing; just as an artist who blurs art with political combinations and systems loses his genius. Not long ago, a man endowed with the gift of divining by cards, a rival to Madame Fontaine, became addicted to vicious practices, and being unable to tell his own fate from the cards, was arrested, tried, and condemned at the court of assizes. Madame Fontaine, who predicts the future eight times out of ten, was never able to know if she would win or lose in a lottery."

"It is the same thing in magnetism," remarked Bixiou. "A man can't magnetize himself."

"Heavens! now we come to magnetism!" cried Gazonal. "*Ah ça!* do you know everything?"

"Friend Gazonal," replied Bixiou, gravely, "to be able to laugh at everything one must know everything. As for me, I've been in Paris since my childhood; I've lived, by means of my pencil, on its follies and absurdities, at the rate of five caricatures a month. Consequently, I often laugh at ideas in which I have faith."

"Come, let us get to something else," said Léon. "We'll go to the Chamber and settle the cousin's affair."

"This," said Bixiou, imitating Odry in "*Les Funambules*," "is high comedy, for we will make the first orator we meet pose for us, and you shall see that in those halls of legislation, as elsewhere, the Parisian language has but two tones, — Self-interest, Vanity."

As they got into their *citadine*, Léon saw in a rapidly driven cabriolet a man to whom he made a sign that he had something to say to him.

"There's Publicola Masson," said Léon to Bixiou. "I am going to ask for a sitting this evening at five o'clock, after the Chamber. The cousin shall then see the most curious of all the originals."

"Who is he?" asked Gazonal, while Léon went to speak to Publicola Masson.

"An artist-pedicure," replied Bixiou, "author of a 'Treatise on Corporistics,' who cuts your corns by subscription, and who, if the Republicans triumph for six months, will assuredly become immortal."

"Drives his carriage!" ejaculated Gazonal.

"But, my good Gazonal, it is only millionnaires who have time to go afoot in Paris."

"To the Chamber!" cried Léon to the coachman, getting back into the carriage.

"Which, monsieur?"

"Deputies," replied Léon, exchanging a smile with Bixiou.

"Paris begins to confound me," said Gazonal.

"To make you see its immensity, — moral, political and literary, — we are now proceeding like the Roman *cicerone*, who shows you in Saint Peter's the thumb of the statue you took to be life-size, and the thumb proves to be a foot long. You have n't yet measured so much as a great toe of Paris."

"And remark, cousin Gazonal, that we take things as they come; we have n't selected."

"This evening you shall sup as they feasted at Belshazzar's; and there you shall see our Paris, our own particular Paris, playing *lansquenet*, and risking a hundred thousand francs at a throw without winking."

A quarter of an hour later the *citadine* stopped at

the foot of the steps going up to the Chamber of Deputies, at that end of the Pont de la Concorde which leads to discord.

"I thought the Chamber unapproachable?" said the provincial, surprised to find himself in the great lobby.

"That depends," replied Bixiou; "materially speaking, it costs thirty sous for a *citadine* to approach it; politically, you have to spend rather more. The swallows thought, so a poet says, that the Arc de Triomphe was erected for them; we artists think that this public building was built for us, — to compensate for the stupidities of the Théâtre-Français and make us laugh; but the comedians on this stage are much more expensive; and they don't give us every day the value of our money."

"So this is the Chamber!" said Gazonal, as he paced the great hall in which there were then about a dozen persons, and looked around him with an air which Bixiou noted down in his memory and reproduced in one of the famous caricatures with which he rivalled Gavarni.

Léon went to speak to one of the ushers who go and come continually between this hall and the hall of sessions, with which it communicates by a passage in which are stationed the stenographers of the "Moniteur" and persons attached to the Chamber.

"As for the minister," replied the usher to Léon as Gazonal approached them, "he is there; but I don't know if Monsieur Giraud has come. I'll see."

As the usher opened one side of the double door through which none but deputies, ministers, or messengers from the king are allowed to pass, Gazonal saw a man come out who seemed still young, although he was really forty-eight years old, and to whom the usher evidently indicated Léon de Lora.

"Ha! you here!" he exclaimed, shaking hands with both Bixiou and Lora. "Scamps! what are you doing in the sanctuary of the laws?"

"*Parbleu!* we've come to learn how to *blague*," said Bixiou. "We might get rusty if we did n't."

"Let us go into the garden," said the young man, not observing that Gazonal belonged to the party.

Seeing that this new-comer was well-dressed, in black, the provincial did not know in which political category to place him; but he followed the others into the garden contiguous to the hall which follows the line of the quai Napoléon. Once in the garden the *ci-devant* young man gave way to a peal of laughter which he seemed to have been repressing since he entered the lobby.

"What is it?" asked Léon de Lora.

"My dear friend, to prove the sincerity of the constitutional government we are forced to tell the most

frightful lies with incredible self-possession. But as for me, I'm freakish; some days I can lie like a prospectus; other days I can't be serious. This is one of my hilarious days. Now, at this moment, the prime minister, being summoned by the Opposition to make known a certain diplomatic secret, is going through his paces in the tribune. Being an honest man who never lies on his own account, he whispered to me as he mounted the breach: 'Heaven knows what I shall say to them.' A mad desire to laugh overcame me, and as one mustn't laugh on the ministerial bench I rushed out, for my youth does come back to me most unseasonably at times."

"At last," cried Gazonal, "I've found an honest man in Paris! You must be a very superior man," he added, looking at the stranger.

"*Ah ça!* who is this gentleman?" said the *ci-devant* young man, examining Gazonal.

"My cousin," said Léon, hastily. "I'll answer for his silence and his honor as for my own. It is on his account we have come here now; he has a case before the administration which depends on your ministry. His prefect evidently wants to ruin him, and we have come to see you in order to prevent the Council of State from ratifying a great injustice."

"Who brings up the case?"

"Massol."

"Good."

"And our friends Giraud and Claude Vignon are on the committee," said Bixiou.

"Say just a word to them," urged Léon; "tell them to come to-night to Carabine's, where du Tillet gives a fête apropos of railways, — they are plundering more than ever on the roads."

"*Ah ça!* but is n't your cousin from the Pyrenees?" asked the young man, now become serious.

"Yes," replied Gazonal.

"And you did not vote for us in the last elections?" said the statesman, looking hard at Gazonal.

"No; but what you have just said in my hearing has bribed me; on the word of a commandant of the National Guard I'll have your candidate elected —"

"Very good; will you guarantee your cousin?" asked the young man, turning to Léon.

"We are forming him," said Bixiou, in a tone irresistibly comic.

"Well, I'll see about it," said the young man, leaving his friends and rushing precipitately back to the Chamber.

"Who is that?" asked Gazonal.

"The Comte de Rastignac; the minister of the department in which your affair is brought up."

"A minister! Is n't a minister anything more than that?"

"He is an old friend of ours. He now has three hundred thousand francs a year: he's a peer of France; the king has made him a count; he married Nucingen's daughter; and he is one of the two or three statesmen produced by the revolution of July. But his fame and his power bore him sometimes, and he comes down to laugh with us."

"*Ah ça!* cousin; why didn't you tell us you belonged to the Opposition?" asked Léon, seizing Gazonal by the arm. "How stupid of you! One deputy more or less to Right or Left and your bed is made."

"We are all for *the Others* down my way."

"Let 'em go," said Bixiou, with a facetious look; "they have Providence on their side, and Providence will bring them back without you and in spite of themselves. A manufacturer ought to be a fatalist."

"What luck! There's Maxime, with Canalis and Giraud," said Léon.

"Come along, friend Gazonal, the promised actors are mustering on the stage," said Bixiou.

And all three advanced to the above-named personages, who seemed to be sauntering along with nothing to do.

"Have they turned you out, or why are you idling about in this way?" said Bixiou to Giraud.

"No, while they are voting by secret ballot we have come out for a little air," replied Giraud.

"How did the prime minister pull through?"

"He was magnificent!" said Canalis.

"Magnificent!" repeated Maxime.

"Magnificent!" cried Giraud.

"So! so! Right, Left, and Centre are unanimous!"

"All with a different meaning," observed Maxime de Trailles.

Maxime was the ministerial deputy.

"Yes," said Canalis, laughing.

Though Canalis had already been a minister, he was at this moment tending toward the Right.

"Ah! but you had a fine triumph just now," said Maxime to Canalis; "it was you who forced the minister into the tribune."

"And made him lie like a charlatan," returned Canalis.

"A worthy victory," said the honest Giraud. "In his place what would you have done?"

"I should have lied."

"It is n't called lying," said Maxime de Trailles; "it is called protecting the crown."

So saying, he led Canalis away to a little distance.

"That's a great orator," said Léon to Giraud, pointing to Canalis.

"Yes and no," replied the councillor of state. "A fine bass voice, and sonorous, but more of an artist in words than an orator. In short, he's a fine instrument

but he is n't music, consequently he has not, and he never will have, the *ear of the Chamber*; in no case will he ever be master of the situation."

Canalis and Maxime were returning toward the little group as Giraud, deputy of the Left Centre, pronounced this verdict. Maxime took Giraud by the arm and led him off, probably to make the same confidence he had just made Canalis.

"What an honest, upright fellow that is," said Léon to Canalis, nodding toward Giraud.

"One of those upright fellows who kill administrations," replied Canalis.

"Do you think him a good orator?"

"Yes and no," replied Canalis; "he is wordy; he's long-winded, a plodder in argument, and a good logician; but he does n't understand the higher logic, that of events and circumstances; consequently he has never had, and never will have, the *ear of the Chamber*."

At the moment when Canalis uttered this judgment on Giraud, the latter was returning with Maxime to the group; and forgetting the presence of a stranger whose discretion was not known to them like that of Léon and Bixion, he took Canalis by the hand in a very significant manner.

"Well," he said, "I consent to what Monsieur de Trailles proposes. I'll put the question to you in the Chamber, but I shall do it with great severity."

"Then we shall have the house with us, for a man of your weight and your eloquence is certain to have the *ear of the Chamber*," said Canalis. "I'll reply to you; but I shall do it sharply, to crush you."

"You could bring about a change of the cabinet, for on such ground you can do what you like with the Chamber, and be *master of the situation*."

"Maxime has trapped them both," said Léon to his cousin; "that fellow is like a fish in water among the intrigues of the Chamber."

"Who is he?" asked Gazonal.

"An ex-scoundrel who is now in a fair way to become an ambassador," replied Bixiou.

"Giraud!" said Léon to the councillor of state, "don't leave the Chamber without asking Rastignac what he promised me to tell you about a suit you are to render a decision on two days hence. It concerns my cousin here; I'll go and see you to-morrow morning early about it."

The three friends followed the three deputies, at a distance, into the lobby.

"Cousin, look at those two men," said Léon, pointing out to him a former minister and the leader of the Left Centre. "Those are two men who really have 'the ear of the Chamber,' and who are called in jest ministers of the department of the Opposition. They have the ear of the Chamber so completely that they are always pulling it."

"It is four o'clock," said Bixiou, "let us go back to the rue de Berlin."

"Yes; you've now seen the heart of the government, cousin, and you must next be shown the ascarides, the tænia, the intestinal worm, — the republican, since I must needs name him," said Léon.

When the three friends were once more packed into their hackney-coach, Gazonal looked at his cousin and Bixiou like a man who had a mind to launch a flood of oratorical and Southern bile upon the elements.

"I distrusted with all my might this great bussy of a town," he rolled out in Southern accents; "but since this morning I despise her! The poor little province you think so petty is an honest girl; but Paris is a prostitute, a greedy, lying comedian; and I am very thankful not to be robbed of my skin in it."

"The day is not over yet," said Bixiou, sententially, winking at Léon.

"And why do you complain in that stupid way," said Léon, "of a prostitution to which you will owe the winning of your lawsuit? Do you think you are more virtuous than we, less of a comedian, less greedy, less liable to fall under some temptation, less conceited than those we have been making dance for you like puppets?"

"Try me!"

"Poor lad!" said Léon, shrugging his shoulders,

"have n't you already promised Rastignac your electoral influence?"

"Yes, because he was the only one who ridiculed himself."

"Poor lad!" repeated Bixiou, "why slight me, who am always ridiculing myself? You are like a png-dog barking at a tiger. Ha! if you saw us really ridiculing a man, you'd see that we can drive a sane man mad."

This conversation brought Gazonal back to his cousin's house, where the sight of luxury silenced him, and put an end to the discussion. Too late he perceived that Bixiou had been making him *pose*.

At half-past five o'clock, the moment when Léon de Lora was making his evening toilet to the great wonderment of Gazonal, who counted the thousand and one superfluities of his cousin, and admired the solemnity of the valet as he performed his functions, the "pedicure of monsieur" was announced, and Publicola Masson, a little man fifty years of age, made his appearance, laid a small box of instruments on the floor, and sat down on a small chair opposite to Léon, after bowing to Gazonal and Bixiou.

"How are matters going with you?" asked Léon, delivering to Publicola one of his feet, already washed and prepared by the valet.

"I am forced to take two pupils, — two young

fellows who, despairing of fortune, have quitted surgery for corporistics; they were actually dying of hunger; and yet they are full of talent."

"I'm not asking you about pedestrial affairs, I want to know how you are getting on politically."

Masson gave a glance at Gazonal, more eloquent than any species of question.

"Oh! you can speak out, that's my cousin; in a way he belongs to you; he thinks himself legitimist."

"Well! we are coming along, we are advancing! In five years from now Europe will be with us. Switzerland and Italy are fermenting finely; and when the occasion comes we are all ready. Here, in Paris, we have fifty thousand armed men, without counting two hundred thousand citizens who have n't a penny to live upon."

"Pooh," said Léon, "how about the fortifications?"

"Pie-crust; we can swallow them," replied Masson.

"In the first place, we sha'n't let the cannon in, and, in the second, we've got a little machine more powerful than all the forts in the world, — a machine, due to a doctor, which cured more people during the short time we worked it than the doctors ever killed."

"How you talk!" exclaimed Gazonal, whose flesh began to creep at Publicola's air and manner.

"Ha! that's the thing we rely on! We follow Saint-Just and Robespierre; but we'll do better than they; they were timid, and you see what came of it;

an emperor! the elder branch! the younger branch! The Montagnards did n't lop the social tree enough."

"*Ah ça!* you, who will be, they tell me, consul, or something of that kind, tribune perhaps, be good enough to remember," said Bixiou, "that I have asked your protection for the last dozen years."

"No harm shall happen to you; we shall need wags, and you can take the place of Barère," replied the corn-doctor.

"And I?" said Léon.

"Ah, you! you are my client, and that will save you; for genius is an odious privilege, to which too much is accorded in France; we shall be forced to annihilate some of our greatest men in order to teach others to be simple citizens."

The corn-cutter spoke with a semi-serious, semi-jesting air that made Gazoual shudder.

"So," he said, "there's to be no more religion?"

"No more religion *of the state*," replied the pedicure, emphasizing the last words; "every man will have his own. It is very fortunate that the government is just now endowing convents; they'll provide our funds. Everything, you see, conspires in our favor. Those who pity the peoples, who clamor in behalf of proletaries, who write works against the Jesuits, who busy themselves about the amelioration of no matter what, — the communists, the human-

itarians, the philanthropists, you understand, — all those people are our advanced guard. While we are storing gunpowder, they are making the tinder which the spark of a single circumstance will ignite."

"But what do you expect will make the happiness of France?" cried Gazonal.

"Equality of citizens and cheapness of provisions. We mean that there shall be no persons lacking anything, no millionnaires, no suckers of blood and victims."

"That's it! — maximum and minimum," said Gazonal.

"You've said it," replied the corn-cutter, decisively.

"No more manufacturers?" asked Gazonal.

"The state will manufacture. We shall all be the usufructuaries of France; each will have his ration as on board ship; and all the world will work according to their capacity."

"Ah!" said Gazonal, "and while awaiting the time when you can cut off the heads of aristocrats —"

"I cut their nails," said the radical republican, putting up his tools and finishing the jest himself.

Then he bowed very politely and went away.

"Can this be possible in 1845?" cried Gazonal.

"If there were time we could show you," said his cousin, "all the personages of 1793, and you could

talk with them. You have just seen Marat; well! we know Fouquier-Tinville, Collot d'Herbois, Robespierre, Chabot, Fouché, Barras; there is even a magnificent Madame Roland."

"Well, the tragic is not lacking to your play," said Gazonal.

"It is six o'clock. Before we take you to see Odry in 'Les Saltimbanques' to-night," said Léon to Gazonal, "we must go and pay a visit to Madame Cadine, — an actress whom your committee-man Massol cultivates, and to whom you must therefore pay the most assiduous court."

"And as it is all important that you conciliate that power, I am going to give you a few instructions," said Bixiou. "Do you employ workwomen in your manufactory?"

"Of course I do," replied Gazonal.

"That's all I want to know," resumed Bixiou. "You are not married, and you are a great —"

"Yes!" cried Gazonal, "you've guessed my strong point, I'm a great lover of women."

"Well, then! if you will execute the little manoeuvre which I am about to prescribe for you, you will taste, without spending a farthing, the sweets to be found in the good graces of an actress."

When they reached the rue de la Victoire where the celebrated actress lived, Bixiou, who meditated a trick

upon the distrustful provincial, had scarcely finished teaching him his rôle; but Gazonal was quick, as we shall see, to take a hint.

The three friends went up to the second floor of a rather handsome house, and found Madame Jenny Cadine just finishing dinner, for she played that night in an afterpiece at the Gynmnase. Having presented Gazonal to this great power, Léon and Bixiou, in order to leave them alone together, made the excuse of looking at a piece of furniture in another room; but before leaving, Bixiou had whispered in the actress's ear: "He is Léon's cousin, a manufacturer, enormously rich; he wants to win a suit before the Council of State against his prefect, and he thinks it wise to fascinate you in order to get Massol on his side."

All Paris knows the beauty of that young actress, and will therefore understand the stupefaction of the Southerner on seeing her. Though she had received him at first rather coldly, he became the object of her good graces before they had been many minutes alone together.

"How strange!" said Gazonal, looking round him disdainfully on the furniture of the salon, the door of which his accomplices had left half open, "that a woman like you should be allowed to live in such an ill-furnished apartment."

"Ah, yes, indeed! but how can I help it? Massol is not rich; I am hoping he will be made a minister."

"What a happy man!" cried Gazonal, heaving the sigh of a provincial.

"Good!" thought she. "I shall have new furniture, and get the better of Carabine."

"Well, my dear!" said Léon, returning, "you'll be sure to come to Carabine's to-night, won't you?—supper and *lansquenet*."

"Will monsieur be there?" said Jenny Cadine, looking artlessly and graciously at Gazonal.

"Yes, madame," replied the countryman, dazzled by such rapid success.

"But Massol will be there," said Bixiou.

"Well, what of that?" returned Jenny. "Come, we must part, my treasures; I must go to the theatre."

Gazonal gave his hand to the actress, and led her to the *citadine* which was waiting for her; as he did so he pressed hers with such ardor that Jenny Cadine exclaimed, shaking her fingers: "Take care! I haven't any others."

When the three friends got back into their own vehicle, Gazonal endeavored to seize Bixiou round the waist, crying out: "She bites! You're a fine rascal!"

"So women say," replied Bixiou.

At half-past eleven o'clock, after the play, another *citadine* took the trio to the house of Mademoiselle Séraphine Sinet, better known under the name of

Carabine, — one of those pseudonyms which famous lorettes take, or which are given to them; a name which, in this instance, may have referred to the pigeons she had killed.

Carabine, now become almost a necessity for the banker du Tillet, deputy of the Left, lived in a charming house in the rue Saint-Georges. In Paris there are many houses the destination of which never varies; and the one we now speak of had already seen seven careers of courtesans. A broker had brought there, about the year 1827, Suzanne du Val-Noble, afterwards Madame Gaillard. In that house the famous Esther caused the Baron de Nucingen to commit the only follies of his life. Florine, and, subsequently, a person now called in jest "the late Madame Schontz," had scintillated there in turn. Bored by his wife, du Tillet bought this modern little house, and there installed the celebrated Carabine, whose lively wit and cavalier manners and shameless brilliancy were a counterpoise to the dulness of domestic life, and the toils of finance and politics.

Whether du Tillet or Carabine were at home or not at home, supper was served, and splendidly served, for ten persons every day. Artists, men of letters, journalists, and the *habitués* of the house supped there when they pleased. After supper they gambled. More than one member of both Chambers came there

to buy what Paris pays for by its weight in gold, — namely, the amusement of intercourse with anomalous untrammelled women, those meteors of the Parisian firmament who are so difficult to class. There wit reigns; for all can be said, and all is said. Carabine, a rival of the no less celebrated Malaga, had finally inherited the salon of Florine, now Madame Raoul Nathan, and of Madame Schontz, now wife of Chief-justice du Ronceret.

As he entered, Gazonal made one remark only, but that remark was both legitimate and legitimist: "It is finer than the Tuileries!" The satins, velvets, brocades, the gold, the objects of art that swarmed there, so filled the eyes of the wary provincial that at first he did not see Madame Jenny Cadine, in a toilet intended to inspire respect, who, concealed behind Carabine, watched his entrance observingly, while conversing with others.

"My dear child," said Léon to Carabine, "this is my cousin, a manufacturer, who descended upon me from the Pyrenees this morning. He knows nothing of Paris, and he wants Massol to help him in a suit he has before the Council of State. We have therefore taken the liberty to bring him — his name is Gazonal — to supper, entreating you to leave him his full senses."

"That 's as monsieur pleases; wine is dear," said

Carabine, looking Gazonal over from head to foot, and thinking him in no way remarkable.

Gazonal, bewildered by the toilets, the lights, the gilding, the chatter of the various groups whom he thought to be discussing him, could only manage to stammer out the words: "Madame — madame — is — very good."

"What do you manufacture?" said the mistress of the house, laughing.

"Say laces and offer her some guipure," whispered Bixiou in Gazonal's ear.

"La-ces," said Gazonal, perceiving that he would have to pay for his supper. "It will give me the greatest pleasure to offer you a dress—a scarf—a mantilla of my make."

"Ah, three things! Well, you are nicer than you look to be," returned Carabine.

"Paris has caught me!" thought Gazonal, now perceiving Jenny Cadine, and going up to her.

"And I," said the actress, "what am I to have?"

"All I possess," replied Gazonal, thinking that to offer all was to give nothing.

Massol, Claude Vignon, du Tillet, Maxime de Trailles, Nueingen, du Bruel, Malaga, Monsieur and Madame Gaillard, Vauvinet, and a crowd of other personages now entered.

After a conversation with the manufacturer on the

subject of his suit, Massol, without making any promises, told him that the report was not yet written, and that citizens could always rely upon the knowledge and the independence of the Council of State. Receiving that cold and dignified response, Gazonal, in despair, thought it necessary to set about seducing the charming Jenny, with whom he was by this time in love. Léon de Lora and Bixiou left their victim in the hands of that most roguish and frolicsome member of the anomalous society, — for Jenny Cadine is the sole rival in that respect of the famous Déjazet.

At the supper-table, where Gazonal was fascinated by a silver service made by the modern Benvenuto Cellini, Froment-Meurice, the contents of which were worthy of the container, his mischievous friends were careful to sit at some distance from him; but they followed with cautious eye the manœuvres of the clever actress, who, being attracted by the insidious hope of getting her furniture renewed, was playing her cards to take the provincial home with her. No sheep upon the day of the Fête-Dieu ever more meekly allowed his little Saint John to lead him along than Gazonal as he followed his siren.

Three days later, Léon and Bixiou, who had not seen Gazonal since that evening, went to his lodgings about two in the afternoon.

"Well, cousin," said Léon, "the Council of State has decided in favor of your suit."

"Maybe, but it is useless now, cousin," said Gazonal, lifting a melancholy eye to his two friends.

"I've become a republican."

"What does that mean?" asked Léon.

"I have n't anything left; not even enough to pay my lawyer," replied Gazonal. "Madame Jenny Cadine has got notes of hand out of me to the amount of more money than all the property I own —"

"The fact is Cadine is rather dear; but —"

"Oh, but I did n't get anything for my money," said Gazonal. "What a woman! Well, I'll own the provinces are not a match for Paris; I shall retire to La Trappe."

"Good!" said Bixiou, "now you are reasonable. Come, recognize the majesty of the capital."

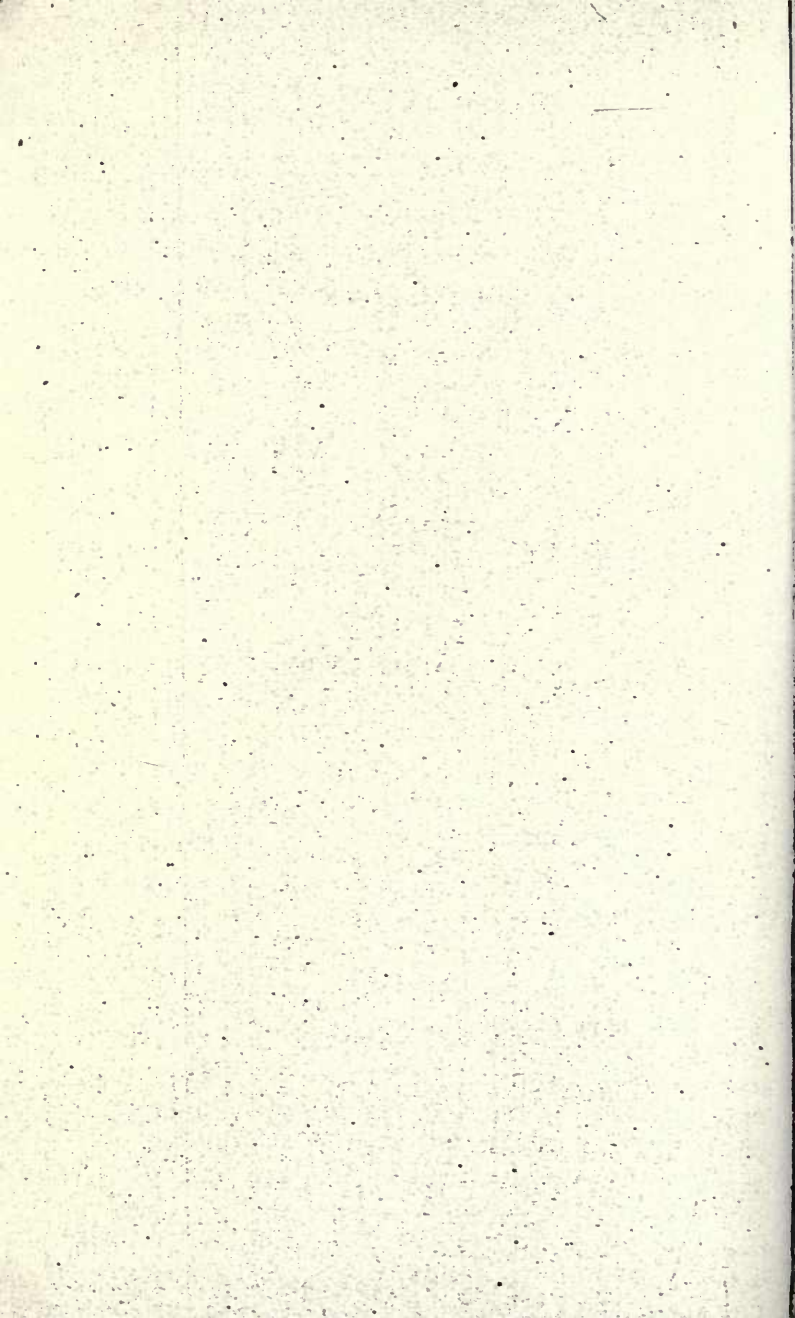
"And of capital," added Léon, holding out to Gazonal his notes of hand.

Gazonal gazed at the papers with a stupefied air.

"You can't say now that we don't understand the duties of hospitality; haven't we educated you, saved you from poverty, feasted you, and amused you?" said Bixiou.

"And fooled you," added Léon, making the gesture of gamins to express the action of picking pockets.

ANOTHER STUDY OF WOMAN.



ANOTHER STUDY OF WOMAN.

TO LÉON GOZLAN,
As A TESTIMONY TO GOOD LITERARY BROTHERHOOD.

THE SALON OF MADemoiselle DES TOUCHES.

In Parisian society you will nearly always find two distinct evenings in the balls and routs. First, the official evening, at which all the invited guests are present, — a gay world bored. Each person poses for his or her neighbor. The majority of the young women have come there to meet one person only. When each is satisfied that she is the handsomest woman present for that person, and that his opinion is probably shared by some others, she is ready to leave, after the exchange of a few insignificant speeches, such as: "Shall you go early to La Crampade?" — "Madame de Portenduère sang very well, I think." —

"Who is that little woman over there, covered with diamonds?" Or, perhaps, after casting about a few epigrams, which give momentary pleasure and lasting wounds, the groups begin to thin, mere acquaintances take leave, and then the mistress of the house stops her personal friends, and a few artists and lively fellows, saying, in a whisper: "Don't go, we shall have supper presently."

Then the company gathers in a little salon. The second, the real evening, begins, — an evening like those of the old régime, when everybody understands what is talked about, conversation is general, and each person present is expected to show his or her wit and to contribute to the general amusement. The scene has changed; frank laughter succeeds to the stiff artificial air which dulls in society the prettiest faces. In short, pleasure begins as the rout ends. The rout, that cold review of luxury, the march-past of self-loves in full costume, is one of those English inventions which tend to turn all other nations into mere machines. England seems desirous that all the world should be as much and as often bored as herself. This second party succeeding the first is therefore in some French houses a lively protest of the former spirits of our joyous land. But, unfortunately, few houses thus protest; and the reason is plain: if suppers are no longer in vogue it is because at no time,

under any régime, were there ever so few persons in France with settled positions, surroundings, fortunes, families, and name as under the reign of Louis Philippe, in which the Revolution was begun again legally. All the world is on the march toward some end, or it is trotting after wealth. Time has become the most costly of all provisions; no one can allow himself the monstrous prodigality of coming home late and sleeping late the next morning. The second party is therefore only found among women rich enough to really entertain; and since July, 1830, such women may be counted on the fingers.

In spite of the mute opposition of the faubourg Saint-Germain, two or three women, among them the Marquise d'Espard and Mademoiselle des Touches, refused to renounce the influence they had held up to that time over Paris, and did not close their salons.

The salon of Mademoiselle des Touches, which was very celebrated in Paris, was the last asylum of the true French wit of other days, with its hidden profundity, its thousand casuistries, and its exquisite politeness. There you might observe the grace of manner which underlay the conventions of politeness; the easy flow of conversation in spite of the natural reserve of well-bred persons; and above all, generosity and largeness of ideas. There, no one dreamed of reserving his thought for a drama; no one saw a

book to be made out of a narrative. In short, the hideous skeleton of literature in want did not rise and show itself apropos of some piquant sally or some interesting topic.

During the evening of which we shall now speak, chance had collected in the salon of Mademoiselle des Touches a number of persons whose undeniable merits had won for them European reputations. This is not a flattery addressed to France, for several foreigners were among us. The men who chiefly shone were by no means the most distinguished. Ingenious repartees, shrewd observations, capital satires, descriptions given with brilliant clearness, sparkled and flowed without preparation, lavished themselves without reserve as without assumption, and were delightfully felt and delicately enjoyed. The men of the world were particularly noticeable for a grace, a warmth of fancy that was wholly artistic. You will meet elsewhere in Europe elegant manners, cordiality, good-fellowship and knowledge, but in Paris only, in this salon and those I have just mentioned, will be found in perfection that particular form of mind which gives to these social qualities an agreeable and varied harmony, a fluvial motion by which this wealth of thoughts, of formulas, of narratives, of history itself, winds easily along.

Paris, the capital of taste, alone knows the science

which changes conversation to a joust in which the quality of each mind is condensed into a flash, where each tilter says his word and casts his experience into it, where all are amused, refreshed, and have their faculties exercised. There alone you can exchange ideas; there you do not carry, like the dolphin in the fable, a monkey on your back; there you are understood, and you run no risk of staking your gold against false coin or copper. There, in short, talk, light and deep, floats, undulates, and turns, changing aspect and color at every sentence; there, too, secrets are well betrayed. Lively criticism and pithy narrative lead each other on. Eyes are listening as well as ears; gestures put questions to which faces reply. There, all is, in a word, thought and wit. Never had the oral phenomenon, which, if well studied and well-managed, makes the power of the orator and the narrator, so completely bewitched me.

I was not the only one sensitive to these influences, and we passed a delightful evening. The conversation finally turned to narrative, and led, in its rapid course, to curious confidences, striking portraits, and a multitude of fancies, which render that delightful improvisation altogether untransferable to paper. But, by leaving to a few things their tartness, their abrupt naturalness, their sophistical sinuosities, perhaps you will understand the charm of a true French

soirée, taken at the moment when the pleasantest familiarity has made every one forget his or her self-interests, self-loves, or, if you prefer so to call them, pretensions.

About two in the morning, when supper was over, none but a few intimates, all tried friends, tried by an intercourse of fifteen years, and certain men of the world, well-bred and gifted with taste, remained around the table. A tone of absolute equality reigned among them; and yet there was no one present who did not feel proud of being himself.

Mademoiselle des Touches always obliged her guests to remain at table until they took their leave, having many times remarked the total change that takes place in the minds of those present by removal to another room. Between a dining-room and a salon, the charm snaps. According to Sterne, the ideas of an author are different after he has shaved from what they were before. If Sterne is right, we may boldly aver that the inclinations of persons still seated round a dinner-table are not those of the same persons when returned to the salon. The atmosphere is more heady, the eye is no longer enlivened by the brilliant disorder of the dessert; we have lost the benefits of that softening of the spirit, that kindness and good-will which pervaded our being in the pleasant condition of those who have well eaten, and are sitting at their ease on

chairs as comfortable as they make them in these days. Perhaps we talk more willingly in presence of the dessert and in company with choice wines, during the delightful moments when we rest our elbow on the table and lean our head on our hand. Certain it is that people not only like to talk at such times, but they like to listen. Digestion, nearly always attentive, is, according to characters, either talkative or silent. Each person present then follows his bent.

This preamble was needed to introduce you to the charms of a confidential narrative in which a celebrated man, since dead, depicted the innocent jesuitism of a woman with the crafty shrewdness of a man who has seen many things, — a quality which makes public men the most delightful narrators when, like Talleyrand and Metternich, they deign to tell a tale.

De Marsay, who had now been prime minister for more than six months, had already given proofs of superior capacity. Though friends who had long known him were not surprised to see him display both the talents and aptitudes of a statesman, they were still asking themselves whether he felt within himself a great political strength, or whether he had simply developed in the heat of circumstances. This question had just been put to him, with an evidently philosophical intention, by a man of intellect and observation whom he had made a prefect, — a man

who was long a journalist, and who admired the prime minister without mingling his admiration with that touch of sour criticism by which, in Paris, one superior man excuses himself for admiring another.

"Has there been in your earlier life any fact, thought, or desire, which made you foresee your vocation?" asked Émile Blondet; "for we all have, like Newton, our particular apple which falls, and takes us to the sphere in which our faculties can develop."

"Yes," replied de Marsay, "and I'll tell you about it."

Pretty women, political dandies, artists, old men, de Marsay's intimates, settled themselves comfortably, each in his own way, and looked at the prime minister. Is it necessary to say that the servants had left the dining-room, that the doors were closed and the portières drawn? The silence which now fell was so deep that the murmur of the coachmen's voices and the stamping of the horses impatient for their stable came up from the courtyard.

"A statesman, my friends, exists through one quality only," said the minister, playing with his pearl-handled and gold dessert-knife. "To know how at all moments to be master of himself; to be able, on all occasions, to meet the failure of events, however unexpected and fortuitous it may be; in short, to have, in his inner self, a cold, detached being, which

looks on as a spectator at all the movements of our life, our passions, our sentiments, and which inspires us, apropos of all things, with the decision of a species of ready-reckoner."

"You are explaining to us why statesmen are so rare in France," said old Lord Dudley.

"From a sentimental point of view it is certainly horrible," said the minister, "and therefore when this phenomenon appears in a young man (Richelieu, warned of Concini's danger by a letter over-night, slept till mid-day, when he knew his benefactor would be killed at ten o'clock), that young man, be he Pitt, or Napoleon if you like, is a monstrosity. I became that monster very early in life, thanks to a woman."

"I thought," said Madame de Montcornet (Virginie Blondet), smiling, "that we unmade more statesmen than we make."

"The monster of whom I speak is only a monster inasmuch as he resists your sex," said the narrator, with an ironical bow.

"If this tale relates to a love-affair," said the Baronne de Nucingen, "I request that it may not be interrupted by reflections."

"Reflection being so contrary to love," remarked Joseph Bridau.

"I was nineteen years of age," resumed de Marsay;

"the Restoration was becoming re-established; my oldest friends know how impetuous and fiery I then was. I was in love for the first time, and I may, at this late day, be allowed to say that I was one of the handsomest young men in Paris. I had youth and beauty, two advantages due to chance, of which we are as proud as if we had won them. I say nothing about the rest. Like all young men, I was in love with a woman about six years older than myself. Only one of you," he said, looking round the table, "will guess her name or recognize her. Ronquerolles was the only one in those days who fathomed my secret, and he kept it carefully. I might fear *his* smile, but he seems to be gone," said the minister, again looking about him.

"He would not stay to supper," said his sister, Madame de Sérizy.

"For six months possessed by this love, but incapable of suspecting that it mastered me," continued the minister, "I gave myself up to that adorable worship which is the triumph and the fragile happiness of youth. I treasured *her* glove, I drank infusions of the flowers *she* had worn, I rose from my bed to go and stand beneath *her* windows. All my blood rushed to my heart as I breathed the perfume that *she* preferred. I was then a thousand leagues from suspecting that women are furnaces above and marble below."

"Oh, spare us those horrible sentiments," said Madame de Camps, laughing.

"I would then have blasted with contempt the philosopher who published to the world that terrible opinion, so profoundly true," replied de Marsay. "You are all too wise and witty to need me to say more on that point; but perhaps the rest that I have to tell may recall to you your own follies. Well, — a great lady, if ever there was one, a widow without children (oh! she had every advantage), my idol went so far as to shut herself up to mark my handkerchiefs with her own hair; in short, she responded to my follies with follies of her own. How is it possible not to believe in a passion when it is guaranteed by folly? We had put, each of us, all our wits into concealing so complete and glorious a love from the eyes of the world; and we succeeded. Of her, I shall tell you nothing; perfect in those days, she was considered until quite recently one of the handsomest women in Paris; at the time of which I speak men would have risked death to obtain her favor. She was left in a satisfactory condition as to fortune, for a woman who loved and was beloved; but the Restoration, to which she was indebted for higher honors, made her wealth insufficient to meet the requirements of her name and rank. As for me, I had the self-conceit that conceives no suspicions. Although my natural jealousy had in

those days a hundred-and-twenty-Othello power, that terrible sentiment slumbered in my breast like gold in its nugget. I would have made my valet flog me had I felt the baseness to doubt the purity and fidelity of that angel, so frail, so strong, so fair, so naïve, so pure, so candid, whose blue eyes let me penetrate with adorable submission to the bottom of her heart. Never the least hesitation in pose, or look, or word; always white and fresh and tender to her beloved as the eastern lily of the Song of Songs. Ah, my friends!" cried the minister, sorrowfully, becoming for the moment a young man, "We must knock our heads very hard against the marble to dispel that poesy."

This cry of nature, which found its echo among the guests, piqued their curiosity, already so cleverly excited.

"Every morning, mounted on that splendid Sultan you sent me from England," he said to Lord Dudley, "I rode past her *calèche* and read my orders for the day in her bouquet, prepared in case we were unable to exchange a few words. Though we saw each other nearly every evening in society, and she wrote to me every day, we had invented, in order to deceive the world and baffle observation, a system of behavior. Not to look at each other, to avoid ever being together, to speak slightly of each other's

qualities, all those well-worn manœuvres were of little value compared with our device of a mutual false devotion to an indifferent person, and an air of indifference to the true idol. If two lovers will play that game they can always dupe society, but they must be very sure of each other. Her substitute was a man high in court favour, cold, devout, whom she did not receive in her own house. Our comedy was only played for the profit of fools in salons. The question of marriage had not been mooted between us; six years' difference in our ages might cause her to reflect. She knew nothing of the amount of my fortune, which, on principle, I have always concealed. As for me, charmed by her mind, her manners, the extent of her information and her knowledge of the world, I would fain have married her without reflection. And yet her reserve pleased me. Had she been the first to speak to me of marriage, I might have found something vulgar in that accomplished soul. Six full and perfect months! a diamond of the purest water! That was my allowance of love in this low world. One morning, being attacked by one of those bone-fevers which begin a severe cold, I wrote her a note putting off the happiness of a meeting for another day. No sooner was the letter gone than I regretted it. 'She certainly will not believe that I am ill,' I said to myself; for she was fond of seeming jealous and sus-

picious. When jealousy is real," said de Marsay, interrupting himself, "it is the evident sign of a single-minded love."

"Why?" asked the Princesse de Cadignan, eagerly.

"A true and single-minded love," said de Marsay, "produces a sort of bodily apathy in harmony with the contemplation into which the person falls. The mind then complicates all things; it works upon itself, it sets up fantasies in place of realities, which only torture it; but this jealousy is as fascinating as it is embarrassing."

A foreign minister smiled, recognizing by the light of memory the truth of this remark.

"Besides, I said to myself, why lose a happy day?" continued de Marsay, resuming his narrative. "Was n't it better to go, ill as I was? for, if she thought me ill I believed her capable of coming to see me and so compromising herself. I made an effort; I wrote a second letter, and as my confidential man was not on hand, I took it myself. The river lay between us; I had all Paris to cross; when I came within suitable distance of her house I called a porter and told him to deliver the letter immediately; then the fine idea came into my head of driving past the house in a hackney-coach to see if the letter was delivered promptly. Just as I passed in front of it, about two o'clock in the afternoon, the great gate opened to admit the

carriage of — whom do you suppose? The substitute! It is fifteen years since that happened; well! as I tell you of it, this exhausted orator, this minister dried to the core by contact with public business, still feels the boiling of something in his heart and a fire in his diaphragm. At the end of an hour I passed again, — the carriage was still in the courtyard; my note had doubtless not been taken up to her. At last, at half-past three o'clock, the carriage drove away and I was able to study the face of my rival. He was grave, he did not smile; but he was certainly in love, and no doubt some plan was in the wind. At the appointed hour I kept my tryst; the queen of my soul was calm and serene. Here, I must tell you that I have always thought Othello not only stupid, but guilty of very bad taste. No man but one who was half a negro would have behaved as he did. Shakespeare felt that when he called his play the Moor of Venice. The mere sight of the beloved woman has something so healing to the heart, that it dissipates all vexations, doubts, sorrows; my wrath subsided and I smiled again. This at my present age, would have been horribly dissimulating, but then it was simply the result of my youth and love. My jealousy thus buried, I had power to observe. I was visibly ill; the horrible doubts which had tortured me increased the appearance of illness, and she showed me the most

tender solicitude. I found occasion however to slip in the words: 'Had you any visitor this morning?' explaining that I had wondered how she would amuse herself after receiving my first note.

"'I?' she said, 'how could I think of any amusement after hearing of your illness? Until your second note came I was planning how to go to you.'

"'Then you were quite alone?'

"'Quite,' she answered, looking at me with so perfect an expression of innocence that it rivalled that which drove the Moor to kill his Desdemona. As she alone occupied her house, that word was a shocking falsehood. A single lie destroys that absolute confidence which, for certain souls, is the basis itself of love. To express to you what went on within me at that moment, it is necessary to admit that we have an inner being of which the visible man is the scabbard, and that that being, brilliant as light itself, is delicate as a vapor. Well, that glorious inward *I* was thenceforth and forever clothed in crape. Yes, I felt a cold and fleshless hand placing upon me the shroud of experience, imposing upon my soul the eternal mourning which follows a first betrayal. Lowering my eyes not to let her see my dazed condition, a proud thought came into my mind which restored to me some strength: 'If she deceives you she is unworthy of you.' I excused the flush in my face, and

a few tears that came into my eyes, on the ground of increased illness, and the gentle creature insisted on taking me home in her carriage. On the way she was tenderness itself; her solicitude would have deceived the same Moor of Venice whom I take for my point of comparison. In fact, if that big child had hesitated two seconds longer he would, as any intelligent spectator divines, have asked pardon of Desdemona. Therefore, to kill a woman is the act of a child. She wept as she left me at my own door, so unhappy was she at not being able to nurse me herself! She wished she were my valet, she was jealous of his cares! All this was written to me the next day as a happy *Clarissa* might have written it. There is always the soul of a monkey in the sweetest and most angelic of women!"

At these words the women present lowered their eyes as if wounded by a cruel truth so cruelly stated.

"I tell you nothing of the night, nor of the week that I passed," continued de Marsay; "but it was then that I saw myself a statesman."

Those words were so finely uttered that, one and all, we made a gesture of admiration.

"While reflecting, with an infernal spirit, on all the forms of cruel vengeance to which we can subject a woman," continued de Marsay, — "and there were many and irreparable ones in this case, — I suddenly

despised myself; I felt that I was commonplace, and I formulated, insensibly, a dreadful code, that of Indulgence. To take revenge upon a woman, does not such an act admit that there is but one woman in the world for us, and that we cannot live without her? If so, is vengeance a means to recover her? But if she is not indispensable to us, if there are others for us, why not allow her the same right to change that we arrogate to ourselves? This, you must fully understand, applies only to passion; otherwise it would be anti-social; nothing proves the necessity of indissoluble marriage more than the instability of passion. The two sexes need to be chained together like the wild beasts that they are, in laws as mute and unchangeable as fate. Suppress revenge, and betrayal becomes nothing in love, its teeth are drawn. Those who think that there exists but one woman in the world for them, *they* may take to vengeance, and then there is but one form for it, — that of Othello. Mine was different; it was this: —

The last three words produced among us that imperceptible movement which journalists describe in parliamentary debates as “profound sensation.”

“Cured of my cold and of pure, absolute, divinest love, I let myself go into an adventure with another heroine, who was charming, of a style of beauty exactly opposite to that of my deceiving angel. I took

good care, however, not to break with that very clever creature and good comedian, for I don't know whether a true love itself can give more graceful enjoyments than accomplished treachery. Such hypocrisy equals virtue. I don't say this for you Englishmen," added the minister, gently, addressing Lady Barimore, daughter of Lord Dudley. "Well, I even tried to fall in love. It happened that I wanted for this new angel a little gift done with my own hair, and I went to a certain artist in hair, much in vogue in those days, who lived in the rue Boucher. This man had a monopoly of capillary gifts, and I give his address for the benefit of those who have n't much hair of their own; he keeps locks of all kinds and all colors. After receiving my order, he showed me his work. I then saw productions of patience surpassing those of fairy tales and even of convicts; and he put me up to all the caprices and fashions which reigned in the regions of hair.

" 'For the last year,' he said to me, 'there has been a rage for marking linen with hair; happily, I had a fine collection on hand and excellent work-women.'

"Hearing those words, a suspicion assailed me; I drew out my handkerchief and said to him:—

" 'Probably this was done at your place, with false hair?'

“He looked attentively at the handkerchief and said:—

“‘That lady was very difficult to suit; she insisted on matching the very shade of her hair. My wife marked those handkerchiefs herself. You have there, monsieur, one of the finest things of the kind ever executed.’

“Before this last flash of light I might still have believed in something; I could still have given some attention to a woman’s word. I left that shop having faith in pleasure, but, in the matter of love, as much of an atheist as a mathematician. Two months later I was seated beside my ethereal deceiver on a sofa in her boudoir. I was holding one of her hands, which were very beautiful, and together we were climbing the Alps of sentiment, gathering flowers by the way, plucking the leaves from the daisies (there is always a moment in life when we pluck out the daisy leaves, though it may be in a salon where daisies are not). At the moment of deepest tenderness, when we seem to love most, love is so conscious of its want of duration that one feels an invincible need to ask: ‘Dost thou love me?’—‘Wilt thou love me always?’ I seized that elegiac moment, so warm, so flowery, so expansive, to make her tell her finest lies, with the ravishing exaggerations of that Gascon poesy peculiar to love. Charlotte then displayed the choicest flowers

of her deception: she could not live without me; I was the only man in all the world to her; yet she feared to weary me, for in my presence her mind forsook her; near me her faculties became all love; she was too loving not to have many fears; of late she had sought a means to attach me forever to her side; but God alone could do that."

The women who were listening to de Marsay seemed offended by his mimicry; for he accompanied these words with pantomime, poses of the head, and affectations of manner, which conveyed the scene.

"At the moment when I was expected to believe these adorable falsehoods, I said to her, still holding her right hand in mine: —

" 'When do you marry the duke?'

"The thrust was so direct, my glance met hers so straight, that the quiver of her hand lying softly in mine, slight as it was, could not be completely dissembled; her eyes fell before mine, and a slight flush came into her cheeks.

" 'The duke!' she said, feigning the utmost astonishment. 'What can you mean?'

" 'I know all,' I replied; 'in my opinion you had better not delay the marriage. He is rich, he is a duke; but also, he is religious, — more than that, he is a bigot! You don't seem aware how urgent it is that you should make him commit himself in his own eyes

and before God; if you don't do this soon you will never attain your end.'

" 'Is this a dream?' she said, pushing up her hair from her forehead with Malibran's celebrated gesture, fifteen years before Malibran ever made it.

" 'Come, don't play the babe unborn, my angel,' I said, trying to take both her hands. But she crossed them in front of her with an angry and prudish little air. 'Marry him, I am willing,' I continued. 'In fact, I strongly advise it.'

" 'But,' she said, falling at my feet, 'there's some horrible mistake here; I love no man but you in this world; you can ask me for any proof you like.'

" 'Rise, my dear,' I said, 'and do me the honor to be frank.'

" 'Yes, before Heaven.'

" 'Do you doubt my love?'

" 'No.'

" 'My fidelity?'

" 'No.'

" 'Well, then, I have committed the greatest of crimes,' I went on. 'I have doubted your love and your fidelity; and I have looked at the matter calmly —'

" 'Calmly!' she cried, sighing. 'Enough, Henri, I see that you no longer love me.'

" 'You observe that she was quick to seize that way

of escape. In such scenes an adverb is often very dangerous. But luckily curiosity induced her to add:—

“ ‘What have you seen or heard? Have I ever spoken to the duke except in society? Have you ever noticed in my eyes —’

“ ‘No,’ I said, ‘but I have in his. You have made me go eight times to Saint-Thomas d’Aquin to see you both hearing mass together.’

“ ‘Ah!’ she cried, ‘at last I have made you jealous!’

“ ‘I wish I could be,’ I replied, admiring the suppleness of that quick mind, and the acrobatic feats by which she strove to blind me. ‘But, by dint of going to church, I have become an unbeliever. The day of my first cold and your first deception you received the duke when you thought me safe in bed, and you told me you had seen no man.’

“ ‘Do you know that your conduct is infamous?’

“ ‘How so? I think your marriage with the duke an excellent affair; he gives you a fine name, the only position that is really suitable for you, an honorable and brilliant future. You will be one of the queens of Paris. I should do you a great wrong if I placed any obstacles in the way of this arrangement, this honorable life, this superb alliance. Ah! some day, Charlotte, you will do me justice by discovering how

different my character is from that of other young men. You are on the point of being forced to break with me, and yet you would have found it very difficult to do so. The duke is watching you; his virtue is very stern, and it is high time that you and I should part. You will have to be a prude, I warn you of that. The duke is a vain man, and he wants to be proud of his wife.'

"'Ah!' she said, bursting into tears, 'Henri, if you had only spoken!' (you see she was determined to put the blame on me) — 'yes, if you had wished it we could have lived all our lives together, married, happy before the world, or in some quiet corner of it.'

"'Well, it is too late now,' I said, kissing her hands and assuming the airs of a victim.

"'But I can undo it all,' she said.

"'No, you have gone too far with the duke. I shall even make a journey, to separate us from each other more completely. We should each have to fear the love of our own hearts.'

"'Do you think, Henri, that the duke has any suspicions?'

"'I think not,' I replied, 'but he is watching you. Make yourself *dévoté*, attend to your religious duties, for the duke is seeking proofs; he is hesitating, and you ought to make him come to a decision.'

"She rose, took two turns about the boudoir in a

state of agitation either feigned or real; then she found a pose and a glance which she no doubt felt to be in harmony with the situation; for she stopped before me, held out her hand, and said in a voice of emotion: —

“ ‘Henri, you are a loyal, noble, charming man, and I shall never forget you.’ ”

“This was excellent strategy. She was enchanting in this transition, which was necessary to the situation in which she wanted to stand towards me. I assumed the attitude and manners of a man so distressed that she took me by the hand and led me, almost cast me, though gently, on the sofa, saying, after a moment's silence: ‘I am deeply grieved, my friend. You love me truly?’ ”

“ ‘Oh, yes.’ ”

“ ‘Then what will become of you?’ ”

Here all the women present exchanged glances.

“I have suffered once more in thus recalling her treachery, but at any rate I still laugh at the air of conviction and soft inward satisfaction which she felt, if not at my death, at least at my eternal unhappiness,” continued de Marsay. “Oh! you need n't laugh yet,” he said to the guests; “the best is still to come. I looked at her very tenderly after a pause, and said: —

“ ‘Yes, that is what I have asked myself.’ ”

“ ‘What will you do?’

“ ‘I asked myself that question the morning after the cold I told you of.’

“ ‘And? — ’ she said, with visible uneasiness.

“ ‘I began to pay court to that little lady whom I had for my substitute.’

“Charlotte sprang up from the sofa like a frightened doe; she trembled like a leaf, as she cast upon me one of those looks in which a woman forgets her dignity, her modesty, her craftiness, even her grace, — the glittering glance of a hunted viper, forced to its hole, — and said: —

“ ‘I, who loved him! I, who struggled! I, who — ’

“ ‘On that third idea, which I leave you to guess, she made the finest organ pause ears ever listened to.

“ ‘Good heavens!’ she cried, ‘how wretched women are! We are never truly loved. There is nothing real to men in the purest sentiments. But, let me tell you, though you trick us, you are still our dupes.’

“ ‘So I see,’ I said with a contrite air. ‘You have too much wit in your anger for your heart to suffer much.’

“ ‘This modest sarcasm redoubled her wrath; she now shed tears of rage.

“ ‘You have degraded life and the world in my eyes,’ she said; ‘you have torn away all my illusions, you have depraved my heart — ’

"In short, she said to me all that I had the right to say to her, with a bare-faced simplicity, a naïve effrontery, which would certainly have got the better of any man but me.

" 'What will become of us, poor hapless women, in the social life which Louis XVIII.'s Charter has created for us? Yes, we were born to suffer. As for love, we are always above you, and you are always below us in loyalty. None of you have honesty in your hearts. For you, love is a game in which you think it fair to cheat.'

" 'Dear,' I said, 'to take things seriously in our present social life would be to play at perfect love with an actress.'

" 'What infamous treachery!' she cried. 'So this has all been reasoned out?'

" 'No; it is simply reasonable.'

" 'Farewell, Monsieur de Marsay,' she said; 'you have deceived me shamefully.'

" 'Will Madame la duchesse,' I asked in a submissive manner, 'remember Charlotte's wrongs?'

" 'Assuredly,' she said in a bitter tone.

" 'So then, you detest me?'

" She inclined her head; and I left her to a sentiment which allowed her to think that she had something to avenge. My friends, I have deeply studied the lives of men who have had success with women;

and I feel sure that neither the Maréchal de Richelieu, nor Lauzun, nor Louis de Valois ever made, for the first time, so able a retreat. As for my own heart and mind, they were formed then and forever; and the control I gained over the unreflecting impulses which cause us to commit so many follies gave me the coolness and self-possession which you know of."

"How I pity the second woman!" said the Baronne de Nucingen.

An almost imperceptible smile which flickered for a moment on de Marsay's pale lips made Delphine de Nucingen color.

"How people forget!" cried the Baron de Nucingen.

The naïveté of the celebrated banker had such success that his wife, who had been that "second" of de Marsay, could not help laughing with the rest of the company.

"You are all disposed to condemn that woman," said Lady Dudley, "but I can understand why she should not consider her marriage in the light of an inconstancy. Men never will distinguish between constancy and fidelity. I knew the woman whose history Monsieur de Marsay has just related; she was one of the last of your great ladies."

"Alas! you are right there," said de Marsay.

"For the last fifty years we have been taking part in the steady destruction of all social distinctions. We

ought to have saved women from the great shipwreck, but the Civil Code has passed its level over their heads. However terrible the words may be, they must be said; the duchess is disappearing, and so is the marquise. As for baronesses (I ask pardon of Madame de Nueingen, who will make herself a true countess when her husband becomes peer of France), the baronesses have never been regarded seriously."

"Aristocracy begins with the viscountess," remarked Blondet, smiling.

"Countesses will remain," said de Marsay. "An elegant woman will always be more or less a countess, — countess of the Empire, or of yesterday, countess of the *vieille roche*, or, as they say in Italy, countess of civility. But as for the *great lady*, she is dead, — dead with the grandiose surroundings of the last century; dead with her powder, *mouches*, and high-heeled slippers, and her busked corset adorned with its delta of flowing ribbons. Duchesses in the present day can pass through ordinary doors that are not widened to admit a hoop. The Empire saw the last of the trained gowns. Napoleon little imagined the effects of the Code of which he was so proud. That man, by creating *his* duchesses, generated the race of *comme il faut* women whom we see to-day, — the resulting product of his legislation."

"Thought, used as a hammer by the lad leaving

school and the nameless journalist, has demolished the splendors of the social state," said the Comte de Vandenesse. "To-day, any absurd fellow who can hold his head above a collar, cover his manly breast with half a yard of satin in the form of a waistcoat, present a brow shining with apocryphal genius under his frizzed hair, and blunder along in varnished pumps and silk socks costing half a dozen francs, now wears a glass in the arch of one eye by squeezing his cheek against it and, — whether he 's a lawyer's clerk, the son of a contractor, or a banker's bastard, — ogles impertinently the prettiest duchess, rates her charms as she comes down the staircase of a theatre, and says to his friend (clothed by Buisson, like the rest of us), 'There, my dear fellow, is a *comme il faut* woman.'"

"You have never made yourselves," said Lord Dudley, "into a party; it will be long now before you have any place politically. A great deal has been said in France about organizing labor, but property has never yet organized. Here is what is happening to you: A duke, no matter who (there were still a few under Louis XVIII. and Charles X. who possessed two hundred thousand francs a year, a splendid mansion, and a retinue of servants), — that duke could still behave like a great seigneur. The last of these great French lords is the Prince de Talleyrand. This duke dies, and, let us suppose, leaves four chil-

dren, two of whom are daughters. Each of these heirs, supposing that he has managed to marry them well, will inherit, at most, sixty to eighty thousand francs a year; each is father or mother of several children, consequently obliged to live on one floor, probably the ground-floor, of a house, with the strictest economy, — it may be that they are even obliged to borrow money. The wife of the eldest son, who is a duchess in name only, has neither carriage, nor servants, nor opera-box, nor time of her own; she hasn't even her own suite of rooms in a family mansion, nor her own fortune, nor her personal baubles. She is buried in marriage as a wife of the rue Saint Denis is buried in commerce; she buys the socks of her dear little babes, feeds and teaches her daughters, whom she no longer puts to school in a convent. Your women of rank simply sit upon their nests."

"Alas, yes!" said Joseph Bridau. "Our epoch no longer possesses those exquisite feminine flowers which adorned the great centuries of the French monarchy. The fan of the great lady is broken. Woman no longer blushes, whispers sly malice, hides her face behind her fan only to show it, — the fan serves merely to fan her! When a thing is no longer anything but what it is, it is too useful to belong to luxury."

"Everything in France has assisted in producing the *comme il faut* woman," said Daniel d'Arthèz.

"The aristocracy has consented to this state of things by retreating to its estates to hide and die, — emigrating to the interior before ideas as formerly it emigrated to foreign parts before the populace. Women who could have founded European salons, controlled opinion and turned it like a glove, who should have ruled the world by guiding the men of art and thought who outwardly ruled it, have committed the fatal blunder of abandoning their ground, ashamed to have to struggle with a bourgeoisie intoxicated by power and making its *début* on the world's stage only, perhaps, to be hacked in pieces by the barbarians who are at its heels. Where the bourgeois affects to see princesses, there are none but so-called fashionable women. Princes no longer find great ladies to distinguish; they cannot even render famous a woman taken from the ranks. The Due de Bourbon was the last prince to use that privilege."

"And Heaven knows what it cost him!" said Lord Dudley.

"The press follows suit," remarked Rastignac. "Women no longer have the charm of spoken *feuilletons*, delightful satires uttered in choicest language. In like manner we now-a-days read *feuilletons* written in a *patois* which changes every three years, and "little journals," as lively as undertakers, and as light as the lead of their own type. French conversa-

tion is now carried on in revolutionary Iroquois from end to end of France, where the long printed columns of the newspapers take the place in ancient mansions of those brilliant coteries of men and women who *conversed* there in former days."

"The knell of Great Society has sounded, do you know it?" said a Russian prince; "and the first stroke of its iron tongue is your modern French term: *femme comme il faut*."

"You are right, prince," said de Marsay. "That woman, issuing from the ranks of the nobility, or growing from the bourgeoisie, coming from any and every region, even the provinces, is the expression of the spirit of our day, — a last image of good taste, wit, intellect, grace, and distinction united, but all diminishing. We shall see no more *grandes dames* in France, but for a long time still to come there will be *comme il faut* women, sent by public opinion to the Upper Feminine Chamber, — women who will be to the fair sex what the 'gentleman' is among his fellows in England."

"And they call that progress!" said Mademoiselle des Touches. "I would like to know what progress is."

"*This*," said Madame de Nucingen: "Formerly a woman might have the voice of a fish-wife, the walk of a grenadier, the forehead of the boldest hussy, a

fat foot, a thick hand, but nevertheless that woman was a 'great lady'; but now, be she a Montmorency, — if the Demoiselles de Montmorency could ever have such attributes, — she would *not* be a woman *comme il faut*."

"What is meant by a woman *comme il faut*?" asked Comte Adam Laginski, naïvely.

"She 's a modern creation, a deplorable triumph of the elective system applied to the fair sex," said de Marsay. "Every revolution has its term, or saying, in which it is summed up and described. Our social revolution has ended in the *comme il faut* woman."

"You are right," said the Russian prince, who had come to Paris to make himself a literary reputation. "To explain certain terms or sayings added century by century to your noble language, would be to write a glorious history. *Organize*, for instance, is the word of the Empire; it contains Napoleon — the whole of him."

"But all that is not telling us what you mean by the woman *comme il faut*," cried the young Pole, with some impatience.

"I'll explain her to you," said Émile Blondet. "On a fine morning you are lounging about Paris. It is more than two o'clock, but not yet five. You see a woman coming towards you; the first glance you cast upon her is like the preface to a fine book; it makes

you anticipate a world of refined and elegant things. Like the botanist crossing hill and vale as he herborizes, among all varieties of Parisian commonness you have found a rare flower. Either this woman is accompanied by two very distinguished-looking men, one of whom is decorated, or by a footman in undress livery who follows her at a little distance. She wears neither startling colors, nor open-worked stockings, nor over-ornamental buckles, nor drawers with embroidered frills visible at her ancles. You notice that her shoes are either prunella, with strings crossed on the instep over thread stockings of extreme fineness, or gray silk stockings that are perfectly plain; or else she wears dainty little boots of exquisite simplicity. Some pretty and not expensive stuff makes you notice her gown, the shape of which surprises the bourgeois; it is almost always a pelisse, fastened by knots of ribbon and delicately edged with a silken cord or an almost imperceptible binding. The lady has an art of her own in putting on a shawl or a mantle; she knows how to wrap it from her waist to her throat, forming a sort of carapace which would make a bourgeoisie look like a tortoise, but under which the *comme il faut* woman contrives to indicate a beautiful figure while concealing it. How? by what means? That is a secret which she keeps, without the protection of any patent. She walks with a certain concen-

tric and harmonious motion, which makes her sweet alluring figure quiver under the stuffs as an adder at mid-day makes the green turf above him move. Does she owe to angel or devil that graceful undulation which plays beneath the black silk mantle, sways the lace of its border, and sheds a balmy air which I shall venture to call the breeze-Parisian. You remark upon her arms, about her waist, around her neck, a science of folds draping even a restive stuff, which reminds you of the antique Mnemosyne. Ah! how well she understands—forgive me the expression—the methods of gait. Examine well the way in which she advances her foot, moulding an outline beneath her gown with a decent precision which excites the admiration, restrained by respect, of those who pass her. If an Englishwoman tried that walk she would look like a grenadier marching to the assault of a redoubt. To the woman of Paris belongs the genius of gait. The municipality has long owed her our coming asphalt pavements. You will observe that this lady jostles no one. In order to pass, she stands still, waiting with proud modesty until way is made for her. Her attitude, both tranquil and disdainful, obliges the most insolent dandy to step aside. Her bonnet, of remarkable simplicity, has fresh strings. Possibly, there may be flowers upon it; but the cleverest of these women wear only ribbons. Feathers require a

carriage, flowers attract the eye. Beneath the bonnet you see the cool and restful face of a woman who is sure of herself, but without self-conceit; who looks at nothing, but sees all; and whose vanity, lulled by continual gratification, gives to her countenance an expression of indifference which piques curiosity. She knows she is being studied; she is well aware that nearly every one, even women, turn round to look at her. She passes through Paris like a film of gossamer, as white and as pearly. This beautiful species of the sex prefers the warmest latitudes and the cleanest longitudes in Paris; you will therefore find her between the 10th and the 110th arcade of the rue de Rivoli, along the line of the boulevards, from the equator of the Panorama, where the productions of the Indies flourish and the finest creations of industry are blooming, to the cape of the Madeleine; you will find her also in the least muddy regions of the bourgeoisie, between number 30 and number 150 of the rue du Faubourg-Saint-Honoré. During the winter she takes her pleasure on the terrace of the Feuillants, and not upon the bituminous pavements which skirt it. According to weather, she glides through the alleys of the Champs Élysées. Never will you meet this charming variety of womankind in the hyperboreal regions of the rue Saint-Denis, never in the Kamtschatka of muddy streets small and commercial, and never any-

where in rainy weather. These flowers of Paris, opening to the sun, perfume the promenades and fold their leaves by five in the afternoon like a convolvulus. The women whom you will see later having slightly the same air and trying to imitate them are another race. This fair unknown, the Beatrice of our day, is the *comme il faut* woman.

“It is not always easy, my dear count,” said Blondet, interrupting himself for a moment, “for foreigners to perceive the differences by which a connoisseur emeritus distinguishes the two species, for women are born comedians. But those differences strike the eye of all Parisians: hooks are visible, tapes show their yellowish white through a gap at the back of the gown; shoes are worn at heel, bonnet strings have been ironed, the gown puffs out too much, the bustle is flattened. You notice a sort of effort in the premeditated lowering of the eyelids. The attitude is conventional. As for the bourgeoisie, it is impossible to confound her with the woman who is *comme il faut*; she makes an admirable foil to her, she explains the charm the unknown lady has cast upon you. The bourgeoisie is busy; she is out in all weathers; comes and goes and trots; is undecided whether she will, or whether she will not enter a shop. Where the *comme il faut* woman knows perfectly well what she wants and what she means to do, the bourgeoisie is undecided, pulls up

her gown to cross a gutter, drags a child after her, and is forced to watch for carriages; she is a mother in public and lectures her daughter; carries money in a handbag and wears open-work stockings, a boa above a fur cape in winter, and a shawl with a scarf in summer, — the bourgeoisie is an adept at the pleonasms of the toilet. As for your Beatrice, you will find her in the evening at the Opera, or in a ballroom. She then appears under an aspect so different that you fancy her two creations without analogy. The woman has issued from her morning vestments like a butterfly from its larva. She serves, as a dainty to your raptured eyes, the form which her shawl scarce outlined in the morning. At the theatre the woman of society never goes higher than the second tier of boxes, unless at the Italian opera. You can therefore study at your ease the judicious slowness of her movements. This adorable manœuvrer uses all the little artifices of woman's policy with a natural ease that precludes the idea of art and premeditation. Is her hand royally beautiful, the most suspicious man would believe it absolutely necessary to roll, or fasten up, or toss aside whichever ringlet or curl she may touch. Has she nobility of profile, you will think she is merely giving irony or charm to what she says to her neighbor, by turning her head in a manner to produce that magic effect, so dear to great painters, which

draws the light to the cheek, defines the nose with a clear outline, illumines the pink of the nostril, carves the forehead with sharp prominence, and leaves a touch of high light on the chin. If she has a pretty foot she throws herself on a sofa with the coquetry of a cat in the sunshine, her feet forward, without your seeing anything more in that pretty pose than a charming model for lassitude offered to a sculptor. No other woman but the woman *comme il faut* is ever perfectly at her ease in her clothes; nothing disturbs her. You will never see her putting in place, like a bourgeoisie, a recalcitrant shoulder-knot, or looking to see if the lace of her chemisette accomplishes its office of unfaithful guardian to the sparkling whiteness of her bosom; never will you find her looking in a mirror to discover if her coiffure is perfectly intact. Her toilet is always in harmony with her character; she has had time to study herself and to decide what suits her; she has long known what does not suit her. You never see her when the audience of a theatre disperses; she departs before the end of the play. If by chance she is seen, calm and sedate, upon the steps of the staircase, some powerful sentiment has prompted her. She is there to order; she has some look to give, some promise to receive. Perhaps she is descending slowly to gratify the vanity of a slave whom she occasionally obeys. If you meet her in society, at a ball or a

soirée, you will gather the honey, real or affected, of her practised voice; you will be enchanted with her empty talk, to which she contrives to impart the semblance of thought with inimitable skill — ”

“Then it is n’t necessary for the *comme il faut* woman to have intellect?” said the young Polish count.

“It is impossible to be that kind of woman without taste,” said the Princesse de Cadignan.

“And to have taste is, in France, to have more than mind,” said the Russian prince.

“The mind of this woman is the triumph of an art that is wholly plastic,” replied Blondet. “You don’t know what she says, but you are charmed. She has nodded her head or sweetly shrugged her handsome shoulders, or gilded some meaningless phrase with a smile or a charming pout, or put Voltaire’s epigram into an ‘Oh!’ an ‘Ah!’ an ‘Is it possible?’ The turn of her head is an active interrogation; she gives meaning of some kind to the movement with which she dances a vinaigrette fastened by a chain to her finger. These are artificial great effects obtained by superlatively small ones: she lets her hand fall nobly from the arm of her chair, and all is said; she has rendered judgment without appeal fit to move the most insensible. She has listened to you, she has given you an opportunity to show your wit; and — I

appeal to your modesty — such moments in society are rare.”

The innocent air of the young Pole whom Blondet was addressing made every one laugh heartily.

“You can’t talk half an hour with a bourgeoisie before she brings to light her husband under one form or another,” continued Blondet, whose gravity did not give way; “but if your *comme-il faut* woman is married she has the tact to conceal her husband, and the labor of Christopher Columbus would hardly enable you to discover him. If you have not been able to question others on this point, you will see her toward the end of the evening fix her eyes steadily on a man of middle age, who inclines his head and leaves the room; she has told her husband to call up the carriage, and she departs. In her own house no *comme il faut* woman is ever visible before four o’clock, the hour at which she receives. She is wise enough to make you wait even then. You will find good taste throughout her house; her luxury is intended for use, and is renewed when needful; you will see nothing there under glass cases, nor any swathings of protective gauze. The staircase is warm; flowers gladden you everywhere; flowers are the only presents she accepts, and those from a few persons only; bouquets give pleasure and live for a single day and are then renewed. To her they are, as in the East, a symbol and a promise.

The costly trifles of fashion are spread about, but her salons are not turned into a museum or an old curiosity shop. You will find her seated on a sofa at the corner of the fireplace, whence she will bow to you without rising. Her conversation is no longer that of the ballroom; in her own house she is bound to entertain you. The *comme il faut* woman possesses all these shades of behaviour in perfection. She welcomes in you a man who will swell the circle of her society, the great object of the cares and anxieties of all women of the world. Consequently, to attach you to her salon she will make herself charmingly coquettish. You will feel above all, in that salon, how isolated women are in the present day and why they endeavor to have a little society about them in which they can shine as constellations. But this is the death of conversation; conversation is impossible without generalities."

"Yes," said de Marsay, "you have seized upon the great defect of our epoch. Epigram, that book in a word, no longer falls, as in the eighteenth century, on persons and on things, but on petty events and dies with the day."

"The wit of the *comme il faut* woman, when she has any," resumed Blondet, "consists in putting a doubt on everything, while the bourgeoisie uses hers to affirm everything. There lies a great difference

between the two women. The bourgeoisie is certain of her virtue; the *comme il faut* woman is not sure if she has any yet, or if she has always had it. This hesitation about all things is one of the last graces our horrible epoch has granted her. She seldom goes to church, but she will talk religion to you and try to convert you, if you have the good sense to play the free thinker, for that will open the way to the stereotyped phrases, the motions of the head and the gestures which belong to such women: 'Ah, fy! I thought you had more intelligence than to attack religion. Society is crumbling already and you remove its prop. But religion at this moment is you and I, it is property, it is the future of our children! Ah! let us not be egotists. Individualism is the disease of our epoch, and religion is the sole remedy; it unites the families that your laws disunite,' etc., etc. She begins in this way a neo-Christian sermon sprinkled with political ideas, which is neither Catholic nor Protestant, but moral (oh! devilishly moral), in which you will find scraps of every stuff that modern doctrines driven to bay have woven."

The women present could not help laughing at the mincing affectations of their sex with which Emile Blondet illustrated his sarcasms.

"Those remarks, my dear Comte Adam," said Blondet, looking at the young Pole, "will show you

that the *comme il faut* woman represents intellectual hotch-potch as well as political jumble; just as she lives surrounded by the brilliant but not lasting products of modern industry, which aims at the destruction of its work in order to replace it. You will leave her house saying to yourself, 'She has, decidedly, very superior ideas;' and you think so all the more because she has sounded your heart and mind with a delicate hand; she has sought your secrets, — for the *comme il faut* woman feigns ignorance of everything, in order to discover everything; but she is discreet; there are things she never knows, however well she may know them. Nevertheless you will feel uneasy, you are ignorant of the real state of her heart. Formerly the great ladies loved openly, banners displayed; now the woman *comme il faut* has her little passion ruled like a sheet of music paper with its crotchets and quavers, its minims, rests, and sharps and flats. Always weak, she will neither sacrifice her love, her husband, nor the future of her children. She's a woman of jesuitical middle-paths, of squint-eyed temporizing with conventions, of unavowed passions carried along between two breakwaters. She fears her servants like an Englishwoman who sees before her the perspective of a divorce suit. This woman, so apparently at her ease in a ballroom, so charming on the street, is a slave at home. She has

no independence, unless locked in with her own ideas. She is determined to remain outwardly the woman *comme il faut*. That's her theory of life. A woman separated from her husband, reduced to a pittance, without carriage or luxury or opera-box, is to-day neither wife, maid, nor bourgeoisie; she dissolves, she becomes a thing. What is to become of her? The Carmelites won't take married women; will her lover always want her? that's a question. Therefore the *comme il faut* woman may sometimes give rise to calumny, but never to condemnation."

"That is all true, horribly true," said the Princesse de Cadignan.

"Consequently, the *comme il faut* woman," continued Blondet, "lives between English hypocrisy and the frankness of the eighteenth century, — a bastard system emblematic of a period when nothing that comes is like that which goes, when transitions lead nowhere, when the great figures of the past are blotted out, and distinctions are purely personal. In my opinion it is impossible for a woman, even though she be born on the steps of a throne, to acquire before the age of twenty-five, the encyclopedic science of nothings, the art of manœuvring, the various great little things, — music of the voice, harmonies of color, angelic deviltries and innocent profligacy, the language and the silence, the gravity and the folly,

the wit and the dulness, the diplomacy and the ignorance which constitute the woman *comme il faut*."

"Accepting the description you have just given of her," said Mademoiselle des Touches to Émile Blondet, "where do you class the woman-author? Is *she* a woman *comme il faut*?"

"When she is not gifted with genius, she is a woman *comme il n'en faut pas*," replied Émile Blondet, accompanying his answer with a glance which might pass for a frank compliment to Camille Maupin. "But that is not my saying; it belongs to Napoleon, who hated women of genius," he added.

"Don't be too hard on Napoleon," said Canalis, with an emphatic tone and gesture. "It was one of his littlenesses — for he had them — to be jealous of literary fame. Who can explain, or describe, or comprehend Napoleon? — a man represented always with folded arms, who yet did all things; who was the greatest known Power, the most concentrated power, the most corrosive and acid of all powers; a strong genius which led an armed civilization throughout the world and fixed it nowhere; a man who could do all because he willed all; prodigious phenomenon of Will! — subduing disease by a battle, yet doomed to die of disease in his bed after living unscathed amid cannon-balls and bullets; a man who had in his head a Code and a Sword, word and action; a

clear-sighted mind which divined all except his own fall; a capricious politician who played his soldiers like pawns and yet respected three heads, Talleyrand, Pozzo di Borgo, and Metternich, diplomatists whose death would have saved the French Empire, but whose life seemed to him of more value than that of thousands of soldiers; a man to whom, by some rare privilege nature had left a heart in his iron body; a man at midnight kind and laughing among women, and the next day handling Europe without gloves; hypocritical and generous; loving meretriciousness and simplicity; without taste, but protecting Art; and, in spite of these antitheses, grand in all things by instinct or by organization; Caesar at twenty-five years of age, Cromwell at thirty, but a good husband and a good father like any bourgeois of Père Lachaise; a man who improvised great public buildings, empires, kings, codes, poems, and one romance, and all with greater range than accuracy. Did he not attempt to make Europe France; and after bearing our weight upon the earth until it changed the laws of gravitation, has he not left us poorer than the day he put his hand upon us? He who made an empire with his name, lost that name on the borders of his empire in a sea of blood and slaughtered men. A man all thought and action, who was able to comprehend both Desaix and Fouché."

"Despotic power and legal justice, each in due season, makes the true king," said de Marsay.

"But," said the Princesse de Cadignan, addressing the other women with a smile both dubious and satirical, "have we women really deteriorated as these gentlemen seem to think? Because to-day, under a system which belittles everything, you men like little dishes, little apartments, little paintings, little journals, little books, is that any reason why women should be less grand than they have been? Does the human heart change because you change your habits? At all epochs passions remain the same. I know splendid devotions, sublime endurances which lack publicity, — fame if you prefer to call it so. Many a woman is not less an Agnes Sorel because she never saved a king of France. Do you think our Marquise d'Espard worth less than Madame Doublet or Madame du Deffand, in whose salon so much harm was said and done? Isn't Taglioni the equal of Camargo? and Malibran of Saint-Huberti? Are not our poets superior to those of the eighteenth century? If, at this moment, thanks to the grocers who govern us, we have no style of our own, didn't the Empire have a style as fully its own as that of Louis XV.? And its splendor was surely fabulous. Have the arts and sciences lost ground?"

"I agree with you, madame," said Général de

Montriveau. "In my opinion the women of this epoch are truly great. When posterity gives a verdict upon us will not Madame Recamier's fame be equal to that of the loveliest women of past ages? We have made history so fast that we lack historians to write it down. The reign of Louis XIV. had but one Madame de Sévigné, while we have a thousand to-day in Paris who can write better letters, but do not publish them. Whether the French woman calls herself *femme comme il faut* or great lady, she will always be the pre-eminent woman. Émile Blondet has made us a picture of the manners and charms of a woman of the present day; but, if occasion offered, this mincing, affected being, who plays a part and warbles out the ideas of Monsieur this, that, and the other, would show herself heroic! Even your faults, mesdames, seem the more poetic because they are and always will be hedged about with great dangers. I have seen much of the world, perhaps I have studied it too late; but, under circumstances in which the illegality of your sentiments might find excuse, I have always observed the effects of some chance, — you may call it Providence if you like, — which fatally overtake those women whom we call frail."

"I hope," said Madame de Camps, "that we are able to be great otherwise."

"Oh, let the Marquis de Montriveau preach to us!" cried Madame de Sérizy.

"All the more because he has preached by example," said the Baronne de Nucingen.

"Alas!" said Général de Montriveau, "of the many dramas, — that's a word you are constantly using," he said with a nod to Blondet, "in which to my knowledge the finger of God has showed itself, the most terrible was one that was partly my own doing."

"Oh, tell it to us!" cried Lady Barimore. "I love to shudder."

"The taste of a virtuous woman," said de Marsay replying to the charming daughter of Lord Dudley.

"During the campaign of 1812," said General de Montriveau, "I was the involuntary cause of a fearful misfortune, which may serve you, Docteur Bianchon," he said, turning to me, — "you, who take so much note of the human mind while you study the human body, — to solve certain of your enigmas concerning the will. I was making my second campaign; I liked the peril and I laughed at everything, simple young lieutenant of artillery that I was! When we reached the Beresina the army no longer kept, as you know, any discipline; military obedience was at an end. A crowd of men of all nations was making its way instinctively from north to south. Soldiers drove their barefooted and ragged general from their camp-fires if he brought them neither wood nor provisions. After the passage

of that famous river, the disorder was lessened. I came out quietly, alone, without food, from the marshes of Zemin, and I walked along looking for a house where some one might be willing to admit me. Finding none all day, being driven from those I came to, I fortunately saw late in the evening a miserable little Polish farmhouse, of which I can give you no idea unless you have seen the wooden houses of lower Normandy or the poorest hovels of La Beauce. These Polish dwellings consist of a single room, one end of which is divided off by a plank partition and serves as a storehouse for forage. I saw in the twilight a light smoke rising from this building, and hoping to find comrades more compassionate than the persons I had hitherto addressed, I marched boldly to the door. Entering, I found a table spread. Several officers, among whom was a woman (a not unusual sight), were eating potatoes and horse-flesh broiled on the embers, and frozen beetroot. I recognized two or three captains of artillery belonging to the regiment in which I had first served. I was received with a volley of acclamations which would greatly have surprised me on the other side of the Beresina; but at this moment the cold was less intense, my comrades were resting, they were warm, they were eating, and piles of straw at the end of the room offered them the perspective of a delightful night. We did n't ask for

much in those days. My comrades could be philanthropic gratis, — a very common way of being philanthropic, by the bye. At the end of the table, near the door which led into the small room filled with straw and hay, I saw my former colonel, one of the most extraordinary men I have ever met in the varied collection of men it has been my lot to know. He was an Italian. Whenever human beings are beautiful in southern countries they are sublimely beautiful. Have you ever remarked the singular whiteness of Italians when they are white? It is magnificent, especially in the light. When I read the fantastic portrait Charles Nodier has given us of Colonel Oudet, I found my own sensations expressed in every sentence. Italian, like most of the officers of his regiment, — borrowed by the Emperor from the army of Prince Eugène, — my colonel was a man of great height, admirably proportioned, possibly a trifle too stout, but amazingly vigorous and light, agile as a greyhound. His black hair, curling profusely, set into brilliant relief a clear white skin like that of a woman. He had handsome feet, small hands, a charming mouth, and an aquiline nose with delicate lines, the tip of which contracted naturally and turned white when he was angry, which was often. His irascibility so passed all belief that I shall tell you nothing about it; you shall judge for yourself. No one was ever at ease in his presence.

Perhaps I was the only man who did not fear him. It is true that he had taken a singular liking to me; he thought whatever I did was good. When anger worked within him, his forehead contracted, his muscles stood out in the middle of it like the horse-shoe of Redgauntlet. That sign would have terrified you more than the magnetic lightning of his blue eyes. His whole body would then quiver, and his strength, already so great in his normal condition, passed all bounds. He rolled his *r*'s excessively. His voice, certainly as powerful as that of Charles Nodier's Oudet, gave an indescribable richness of sound to the syllable which contained that consonant. Though this vice of pronunciation was, in him, and at all times, a charm, you cannot imagine the power that accent, considered so vulgar in Paris, was capable of expressing when he commanded a manoeuvre, or was in any way excited. You must have heard it to understand it. When the colonel was tranquil his blue eyes were full of angelic sweetness; his pure brow sparkled with an expression that was full of charm. At a parade of the Army of Italy no man could compare with him. Even d'Orsay himself, the handsome d'Orsay, was vanquished by our colonel at the last review held by Napoleon before his entrance into Russia. In this gifted man all was contradiction. Passion lives by contrasts. Therefore do not ask me whether he was

conscious of those irresistible influences to which our nature" (the general looked toward the Princesse de Cadignan) "bends like molten glass beneath the blower's pipe; but it so chanced that by some singular fatality the colonel had had but few love-affairs, or had neglected to have them. To give you an idea of his violence, I will tell you in two words what I once saw him do in a paroxysm of anger. We were marching with our cannon along a very narrow road, bordered on one side by woods and on the other by a rather steep bank. Half way along this road we met another regiment of artillery, its colonel marching with it. This colonel wanted to make the captain of our regiment at the head of the first battery give way to his troop. Naturally our captain refused. But the colonel of the other regiment made a sign to his first battery to advance, and in spite of the care the first driver took to keep close into the woods the wheel of the gun carriage caught the right leg of our captain, broke it, and flung him to the other side of his horse. It was done in a moment. Our colonel, who happened to be at a little distance, saw the quarrel, and galloped furiously up through the trees and among the wheels at the risk of being flung with all his hoofs in the air, reaching the spot in face of the other colonel just as the captain cried out, 'To me!' and fell. No! our Italian colonel was no longer a man. Foam, like that

of champagne, boiled from his mouth, he growled like a lion. Incapable of uttering a word, even a cry, he made a dreadful sign to his adversary, pointing to the wood, and drew his sabre. They entered it. In two seconds we saw the other colonel on the ground with his head split in two. The soldiers of that regiment retreated, ha! the devil! and in quick time, too! Our captain, who just missed being killed, and who was yelping in the ditch where the wheel of the gun-carriage had flung him, had a wife, a charming Italian woman from Messina, who was not indifferent to our colonel. This circumstance had greatly increased his fury. His protection was due to the husband; he was bound to defend him as well as the wife. Now, in the miserable Polish cabin this side of Zembin, where, as I told you, I received such cordial welcome, this very captain sat opposite to me, and his wife was at the other end of the table opposite to the colonel. She was a little woman, named Rosina, very dark, but bearing in her black eyes, shaped like almonds, all the ardour of the sun of Sicily. At this moment she was deplorably thin, her cheeks were covered with dust like a peach exposed to the weather on a high-road. Scarcely clothed and all in rags, wearied by marches, her hair in disorder beneath the fragment of a shawl tied across her head, there was still all the presence of a woman about her; her move-

ments were pretty, her rosy, dimpled mouth, her white teeth, the lines of her face and bust, — charms which misery, cold, and want of care had not entirely effaced, — still told of love and sweetness to any one whose mind could dwell upon a woman. Rosina evidently possessed one of those natures which are fragile in appearance, but are full of nervous strength. The face of the husband, a Piedmontese nobleman, expressed a sort of jeering good-humor, if it is permissible to ally the two words. Brave, intelligent and educated, he nevertheless seemed to ignore the relations which had existed between his wife and the colonel for nearly three years. I attributed this indifference to the singular customs of Italy, or to some secret in their own home; but there was in the man's face one feature which had always inspired me with involuntary distrust. His underlip, thin and very flexible, turned down at its two extremities instead of turning up, which seemed to me to reveal an underlying cruelty in a character apparently phlegmatic and indolent. You can well imagine that the conversation was not brilliant when I entered. My weary comrades were eating in silence, but they naturally asked me a few questions; and we related our several misfortunes, mingling them with reflections on the campaign, the generals, their blunders, the Russians, and the cold. Soon after my arrival, the

colonel, having finished his meagre meal, wiped his moustache, wished us good-night, cast his black eye toward the woman, and said, 'Rosina.' Then without awaiting any reply he went into the space partitioned off for forage. The meaning of his summons was evident; and the young woman made an indescribable gesture, which expressed both the annoyance that she felt at seeing her dependence thus exhibited without respect for human feelings, and her sense of the affront offered to her dignity as a woman and to her husband. And yet in the strained expression of her features and in the violent contraction of her eyebrows, there seemed to be a sort of foreboding; perhaps a presentiment of her fate came over her. Rosina continued to sit tranquilly at the table; a moment later the colonel's voice was heard repeating her name, 'Rosina!' The tone of this new summons was even more brutal than that of the first. The rolling accent of the colonel's voice and the echo which the Italian language gives to vowels and final letters revealed in a startling manner the despotism, impatience, and will of that man. Rosina turned pale, but she rose, passed behind us, and joined the colonel. All my comrades maintained a rigid silence; but I, unhappily, after looking round at them, began to laugh, and the laugh was then repeated from mouth to mouth. 'You laugh?' said the husband. 'Faith, comrade,' I

replied, becoming serious, 'I did wrong, I admit it; I ask ten thousand pardons; and if you are not content with such excuses I am ready to give you satisfaction.' 'It is not you who have done wrong, it is I,' he replied coldly. Thereupon we all shook down our straw about the room and were soon lost in the sleep of weariness. The next day each man, without awaking his neighbor, without looking for a journeying companion, started on his way with that utter egotism which made our retreat from Russia one of the most horrible dramas of personality, sadness, and horror which ever took place beneath the heavens. Yet after each man had gone some seven or eight hundred yards from our night's lodging, we came together and marched along like geese led in flocks by the unconscious despotism of a child. A common necessity was driving us along. When we reached a slight elevation from which we could see the house where we had passed the night, we heard sounds that resembled the roaring of lions in the desert or the bellowing of bulls; but no! that clamor could not be compared to any known sound. Mingled with that horrible and sinister roar came the feeble cry of a woman. We all turned round, seized with a sensation — I know not how to describe it — of fear; the house was no longer visible, only a burning pile; the building, which some one had barricaded, was in flames. Clouds of

smoke, driven by the wind, rolled towards us, bringing raucous sounds and a strong indescribable odor. A few steps from us marched the captain, who had quietly joined our caravan; we looked at him in silence, for none of us dared question him. But he, divining our curiosity, touched his breast with the forefinger of his right hand and pointed with the left to the conflagration. 'Son' io!' he said. We continued our way without another word to him."

"There is nothing more fearful than the revolt of sheep," said de Marsay.

"It would be too dreadful to let us part with that horrible scene in our minds," said Madame de Montcornet. "I shall dream of it."

"Tell us, before we go, what punishment befel Monsieur de Marsay's first love," said Lord Dudley, smiling.

"When Englishmen jest their foils are buttoned," remarked Émile Blondet.

"Monsieur Bianchon can tell you that," replied de Marsay, turning to me. "He saw her die."

"Yes," I said, "and her death was one of the most beautiful I ever witnessed. The duke and I had passed the night beside the pillow of the dying woman, whose disease, consumption, was then in its final stages; no hope remained, and she had received the last offices of the Church the preceding evening. The

duke had fallen asleep. Madame la duchesse, waking about four in the morning, made me, in a touching manner and with a smile, a tender little sign to let him sleep; and yet she felt she was about to die! She had reached a stage of extraordinary thinness, but her face preserved its features, and its outlines were truly sublime. Her pallor made her skin resemble porcelain behind which a light has been placed. Her brilliant eyes and the color in her cheeks shone out upon this skin so softly beautiful, while the whole countenance seemed to breathe forth a commanding tranquillity. Evidently she pitied the duke, and the feeling took its rise in a lofty sentiment which seemed to see no limit in the approach of death. The silence was profound. The chamber, softly lighted by a lamp, had the appearance of all sick-chambers at the moment of death. At that instant the clock struck. The duke awoke, and was in despair at having slept. I did not see the gesture of impatience with which he showed the regret he felt at having lost his wife from sight during the few last moments granted to him; but it is certain that any other person than the dying woman might have been mistaken about him. A statesman, preoccupied with the interests of France, the duke had many of those apparent oddities which often make men of genius pass for fools, though the explanation may be found in the exquisite nature and

requirements of their mind. He now took a chair beside the bed and looked fixedly at his wife. The dying woman put out her hand and took that of her husband which she pressed gently, saying in a soft but trembling voice:—

““My poor friend, who will understand you in future?’

“So saying, she died, looking at him.”

“The doctor’s stories,” said the Duc de Rhétoré, “always leave a deep impression.”

“But a tender one,” said Mademoiselle des Touches.

COMEDIES PLAYED GRATIS.



COMEDIES PLAYED GRATIS.

TO MADAME LA PRINCESSE DE BELGIOJOSO, NÉE
TRIVULCE.

To know how to sell, to be able to sell, and to sell! The public has no conception of all that Paris owes of grandeur to those three faces of one problem. The dazzling brilliancy of shops, as rich as the salons of the nobility before 1789, the splendor of cafés, which often eclipses, and very easily, that of the neo-Versailles; the poems of show-windows, pulled to pieces every night, reconstructed every morning; the elegance and grace of the young men communicating with the female buyers; the piquant faces and toilets of the young girls whose business it is to attract the male customer; lastly, and recently, the vast spaces and depths and Babylonian luxury of the galleries, in which the shop-keepers monopolize specialties by collecting them in one vast enterprise, — all these

things are nothing. They have merely pleased the most greedy and the most *blasé* organ developed in the human being since the days of the Romans, — an organ whose exactions have now become boundless, thanks to the efforts of refined civilization. That organ is the Eye of a Parisian.

That eye receives and consumes fire-works costing a hundred thousand francs; palaces six thousand feet long and sixty feet high in many-colored glass; the fairy scenes of fourteen theatres every night; ever-changing panoramas; continual exhibitions of master-pieces; worlds of sorrows, universes of joy, as they wander along the boulevards or tread the streets; encyclopedias of rags at the carnival; twenty illustrated works a year; a thousand caricatures; ten thousand vignettes, lithographs, and engravings. That eye drinks in over fifteen thousand francs' worth of gas every evening. Moreover, to satisfy it, the city of Paris spends annually several millions in landscape gardening, points of view, and plantations. But all this is nothing; it is only the material side of the question. Yes, it is in our opinion a very small matter compared with the efforts of intellect, the wiles, worthy of Molière's pen, practised by the sixty thousand clerks and the forty thousand young women who beset the purses of customers as whitebait swarm about the scraps of food which float upon the waters of the Seine.

The Gaudissart of the shop is fully equal in capacity, mental powers, wit, humor, and philosophy to the illustrious commercial traveller who has now become the type of his tribe. Out of the shop, out of his line of business, he is like a balloon without gas; he owes his faculties to his environment of goods to sell, just as the actor is sublime only on the stage. Although, judged by the other shopmen of Europe, the French clerk has far more education than they, — that is, he can talk asphalt, Mabilie, polka, literature, illustrated books, railroads, politics, Chamber, and revolution, — he is excessively dull-minded when he leaves his counter, his yard-stick, and his selling graces. But there, on his own ground, persuasion on his lip, his eye on his customer, and shawl in hand, he eclipses the great Talleyrand; he has more wit than Désaugiers, more cunning than Cléopatra; he is worth more than Monrose with Molière to boot. In his own house Talleyrand would have tricked Gaudissart; but in the shop Gaudissart would fool the prince.

Let us explain this paradox by a fact.

Two pretty duchesses were chattering in the room where the above-mentioned illustrious statesman was reading. They wanted a bracelet and they were expecting some to be sent for selection from the shop of the most celebrated jeweller in Paris. A Gaudissart arrived, armed with three bracelets, three mar-

vels, among which the two women hesitated. Choice! that's the lightning of the intellect. Do you hesitate, unable to choose? Then you are certain to be mistaken. Taste never has two inspirations. At last, after about ten minutes' discussion, they appealed to the prince. He saw the two duchesses helplessly undecided between the two finest of these ornaments, — for the third had been put aside almost from the beginning. The prince did not close his book, neither did he look at the bracelets, he watched the clerk.

“Which would you choose for the girl you like best?” he said addressing him.

The young man pointed to one of the two bracelets.

“In that case, take the other,” said the craftiest of modern diplomatists to the duchesses, “and make two women happy; and you, young man, make your friend happy by presenting to her the other in my name.”

The pretty women smiled and the shopman retired gratified by the present of the prince; but still more by the good opinion he seemed to have of him.

A woman is seen getting out of a brilliant equipage which has stopped in the rue Vivienne before the door of one of those sumptuous establishments where they sell shawls. She is accompanied by another woman. Women almost always start in couples on these expeditions. All, on such occasions, will go through ten

shops before they make up their minds, and as they go from one to another, they laugh over the little comedy the clerks have played to them. But let us examine who played their part best, buyers or seller; which of the two has carried off the honors of the little vaudeville?

When it is a matter of describing the greatest fact of Parisian commerce, namely, the *Sale*, it is necessary to produce a type in summing up the question. Now, as to this, a shawl or a chatelaine worth several thousand francs would certainly seem to cause more emotion than a piece of cambric or a gown for two or three hundred francs. But, O foreigners of both hemispheres, should you ever read this physiology of the counter, know that such scenes are played in all shops over a *barège* at two francs, or a printed muslin at four francs a yard.

How can you, princesses or bourgeois, it matters not which, distrust that pretty and very young man with velvet cheeks colored like a peach, ingenuous eyes, and clothed very nearly as well as your — your — cousin, let us say; a youth gifted with a voice as soft as the fleecy fabric he displays to you? There are three or four others like him. Here's one with black eyes and a decided expression of face, who says to you with an imperious air, "This is what you want." There's another with blue eyes and timid man-

ner and submissive phrases, and you say of him, "Poor lad! he was never born to be a shopman," A third has chestnut hair, and yellow, laughing eyes; he is pleasant of speech, and is gifted with wondrous activity and meridional gayety. A fourth is tawny red, with his beard cut fan-shape, stiff as a communist, stern, imposing, with a fatal cravat and curt speech.

These different species of shopmen, selected and adapted as they are to the leading characteristics of women, are the arms of their master, — a stout individual with a cheery face, rather bald, possessing the stomach of a ministerial deputy, and sometimes decorated with the Legion of honor for having maintained the dignity of French trade. His lines are those of contented rotundity; he has a wife, several children, a country-house, and a balance in the bank. This personage descends into the arena like a *Deus ex machinâ* when some too mixed intrigue requires prompt conclusion. Thus the female purchaser is environed by kindness, courtesy, youth, smiles, pleasantry, — all that civilized man can offer of what is simplest and most deceiving, the whole arranged in careful gradation to suit all tastes.

One word on the optical, architectural, and decorative effects of this comedy, — a short, decisive word; a word of history written on the spot. No. 76 rue de Richelieu is an elegant shop, white and gold, draped

with crimson velvet, which now possesses an entresol, through which the light comes full from the rue de Menars as in a painter's studio, pure, clear, and always equable. Where is the true Parisian lounge who has not admired the Persian, King of Asia, who bears himself so proudly at the angle of that shop in the rue de Richelieu and the rue de la Bourse, charged to say, *urbi et orbi*: "I reign more tranquilly here than at Teheran." Five hundred years hence that piece of carving at the corner of two streets might, were it not for the present immortal analysis, occupy the minds of archaeologists and give rise to volumes in-quarto with diagrams (like those of Monsieur Quatremère de Quincy on the Olympian Jupiter) in which it would be demonstrated that Napoleon was a Sofi of ancient Persia before he was Emperor of the French. Well, the book in which you read this instructive page was kept and sold in that entresol; but the gorgeous shop laid siege to the poor little place, and, by force of banknotes, seized upon it. THE COMEDY OF HUMAN LIFE was forced to yield to the comedy of cashmere shawls. The Persian sacrificed a few diamonds in his crown to increase the much needed light, the rays of which have increased the sales in that shop one hundred per cent, on account of their influence on the play of colors; this light puts into relief all shawl seductions; it is an irresistible light, truly a

golden ray! From that fact judge of the efforts after scenic effect in the shops of Paris.

Let us return to those young shopmen and their portly master (who is received by the King of the French at his table), and to the head-clerk with the ruddy beard and the autocratic manner. These Gandissarts emeriti measure swords with several thousand caprices a week; they know all the vibrations of the cashmere-chord in the feminine heart. When a *lorette*, a respectable lady, the young mother of a family, a *lionne*, a duchesse, a worthy bourgeoisie, a saucy *dunseuse*, an innocent young girl, a too innocent foreigner presents herself, she is instantly analyzed by these seven or eight men, who have studied her from the moment she laid her hand on the knob of the door, — men whom you will see stationed at the windows, behind the counters, at the corners of the shop, looking as if they dreamed of a Sunday's outing; in fact, if you examine them, you will say to yourself, "What *can* they be thinking of?"

A woman's purse, her desires, her intentions, her fancies are better searched in that one moment by those apparently vacant minds than custom-house officers can search a suspected carriage on the frontier in seven quarters of an hour. These intelligent scamps, serious as a noble father, have seen all, — the details of the buyer's apparel, a spot of mud on her

boot, want of style in her motions, dirty or ill-chosen bonnet-strings, the freshness of the gloves, the cut and fashion of the gown betraying the intelligent scissors of Victorine IV., the bauble of Froment-Meurice, in short, all that reveals to a knowing eye the quality, fortune, and character of a woman. Tremble! Never is this sanhedrim of Gaudissarts, led by its master, mistaken. The ideas of each are transmitted from one to another with telegraphic rapidity, by the eye, by twitches of the body, by smiles, by motions of the lips; observe them, and you'll be reminded of the lighting up of the grand avenue of the Champs Élysées, where the gas flies from lamp to lamp precisely as these ideas light up the pupils of clerk after clerk.

If the entering customer be an English woman, the gloomy Gaudissart, mysterious and darksome, like a personage out of Lord Byron, advances. If it is a bourgeoisie, the oldest of the clerks is assigned to her. He shows her a hundred shawls in a quarter of an hour; he bewilders her with colors and designs; he unfolds more shawls than a hawk makes circles over a chicken; so, at the end of half an hour, dizzy, and not knowing how to choose, the worthy woman, flattered and pleased, trusts to the shopman, who at once places her between two hammers, — that of her dilemma, and that of the equal seductions of two shawls.

"This, madame," he says, "is very becoming; it is apple-green, the color now in fashion, but fashions change; whereas this" (the black or white, the sale of which is urgent) "goes well with all styles; you will never find *this* out of fashion."

That is the mere A-B-C of the trade.

"You would hardly believe how much eloquence is required in this devil of a business," said, not long ago, the head Gaudissart of the establishment we have already mentioned, to his two friends, du Ronceret and Bixiou, who had gone to the shop to buy a shawl, the choice of which they left to him. "You are both discreet, and I don't mind speaking to you of the tricks played off by our patron, who is certainly the cleverest man at the business I've ever seen. I don't mean as manufacturer, for Monsieur Fritot is first there, but as seller. He invented the Selim shawl, that is, a shawl impossible to sell, which we sell continually. We keep in a cedar box, very plain, but lined with satin, a shawl worth five or six hundred francs, a shawl sent by the Sultan Selim to the Emperor Napoleon. This shawl is our Imperial guard; it is brought on the field when the cause is nearly lost; *il se vend et ne meurt pas*."

At this instant an Englishwoman got out of a hired carriage and entered the shop, presenting a fine ideal of that phlegmatic coldness which characterizes Eng-

land and all her so-called living products. You might have thought her the statue of the Commander advancing with slow hops of an ungainliness manufactured in the families of England with national care.

"An Englishwoman," whispered the head-clerk in Bixiou's ear, "is our battle of Waterloo. We have women who slip through our fingers like eels, but we catch them again at the door; we have *lorettes* who *blague* us; with them we laugh, for we hold them by credit; we have undecipherable foreign women, to whom we carry shawls at their lodgings, and with whom we come to an understanding through flattery; but the Englishwoman! it is like handling the bronze of Louis XIV.'s statue. Those women regard it as an occupation, a duty, a pleasure to bargain. They put us through all our paces, I can tell you."

The Byronic shopman had advanced.

"Does madame desire an India shawl, or one of French manufacture; high-priced, or —"

"I will see."

"What sum does madame devote to the purchase?"

"I will see."

Turning round to take the shawls and show them, the clerk cast a significant glance ("What a bore!") at his colleagues, accompanied by an almost imperceptible shrug of the shoulders.

"These are our finest qualities in India shawls, —

red, blue, and the yellow-orange tint; they are all ten thousand francs. Here are some at five thousand, and we have others at three thousand."

The Englishwoman, with an expression of stolid indifference, turned her eye-glass on all around her before she looked at the shawls, and gave no sign of approval or disapproval.

"Have you others?" she asked.

"Yes, madame. But perhaps madame has not quite decided that she wants a shawl?"

"Haw! yes, quite decided."

The shopman then fetched three shawls of inferior value, but he spread them forth solemnly, as things of which to say, "Attention to these magnificences."

"Here are some that are more expensive," he said. "They have not yet been offered for sale; they came by couriers and were bought direct from the merchants of Lahore."

"I see," she said. "They suit me much best."

The clerk remained perfectly grave in spite of his inward irritation, which now began to attack du Ronceret and Bixiou. The Englishwoman, cold as a water-cress, seemed to enjoy her own phlegm.

"What price?" she said, pointing to a sky-blue shawl covered with birds sitting on pagodas.

"Seven thousand francs."

She took the shawl and wrapped it round her, looked

at herself in the glass and said, as she gave it back,
"No, I don't like it."

A long quarter of an hour passed in equally fruitless essayals.

"We have nothing more, madame," said the shopman, looking at his master.

"Madame is difficult to suit, like all persons of taste," said the head of the establishment, coming forward with that shop-keeping grace which agreeably mingles wheedling with assumption.

The Englishwoman took up her eyeglass and looked the merchant over from head to foot, unable, of course, to comprehend that the man was eligible to the Chamber and dined at the Tuileries.

"I have but one other shawl, and that I seldom show," he continued; "no one has ever liked it; it is very *old*; only this morning I was thinking of giving it to my wife. We have had it since 1805; it came from the Empress Josephine."

"Show it to me."

"Go and fetch it," said the master to a clerk; "it is in my house."

"I shall be glad to see it," said the Englishwoman.

This answer was to a certain extent a triumph, for the peevish dame was evidently about to leave the shop. She now made believe to look only at the shawls, whereas she was really looking slyly at the

shopmen and the two gentlemen, sheltering her eyes by the frame of her glasses.

"It cost originally twenty thousand francs in Turkey, madame."

"Haw!"

"It was one of seven shawls sent by the Sultan Selim before his catastrophe to the Emperor Napoleon. The Empress Josephine — a creole, as my lady knows, and therefore capricious — changed it for another of those brought by the Turkish ambassador, which my predecessor had in the meantime purchased. I have never been able to recover the value of it, for in France our ladies are not rich enough; it is not as it is in England. The price of this shawl is seven thousand francs, but its value is more than double if you take into account the compound interest —"

"Compounded of what?" said the Englishwoman.

"Here it is, madame."

And the shopkeeper, with precautions which the exhibitors of the *Grüne-gewölbe* of Dresden would have admired, opened with a tiny key a square box of cedar wood, the shape and simplicity of which appeared to impress the Englishwoman. From this box, which was lined with black satin, he lifted a shawl, worth perhaps fifteen hundred francs, of a golden yellow with black designs, the startling colors being surpassed only by the fantastic Oriental figures.

"Splendid!" said the Englishwoman. "It is really fine. That is my ideal of a shawl; it is very magnificent —"

The rest of her remarks were lost in a Madonna-like attitude taken to show off her cold eyes, which she evidently thought handsome.

"The Emperor liked that shawl very much; he used it himself —"

"Himself!" she repeated.

She took the shawl, draped it about her, and examined herself. The proprietor then took the shawl, carried it to the light, handled it, shook it, made it glisten; in short, he played upon it as Liszt plays on the piano.

"It is very fine, beautiful, sweet!" said the Englishwoman, with a cool and tranquil air.

Du Ronceret, Bixiou, and the clerks exchanged looks of satisfaction which signified, "The shawl is sold."

"Well, madame?" said the shopkeeper interrogatively, seeing the Englishwoman absorbed in a sort of contemplation which was far too prolonged.

"Decidedly," she said at last, "I prefer a carriage."

One and the same start passed through the silent, listening clerks, as if some electric fluid had touched them.

"I have a very fine one, madame," replied the master of the shop, tranquilly. "I received it from a Russian princess — the Princess Narzikoff — who left it to me in payment of her bill. If madame would like to see it she would, I am sure, be delighted with it. It has been used only a few times; there's not another like it in Paris."

The stupefaction of the clerks was equalled only by their profound admiration.

"I will see it," she replied.

"If madame will wear the shawl," said the shopkeeper, "she will see the effect in the carriage."

He went to get his hat and gloves.

"How will it end?" exclaimed the head-clerk as he watched his patron handing the Englishwoman into her hired carriage.

The matter now took on to du Ronceret and Bixiou the attraction of the end of a novel, besides the especial interest attaching to all struggles, even petty ones, between France and England.

Twenty minutes later the master of the establishment returned.

"Go to the Hôtel Lawson," he said to a clerk; "here's the card: Mrs. Noswell. Take the bill I will give you; you have six thousand francs to receive."

"But how did you do it?" said du Ronceret, bowing to the king of shopkeepers.

“Eh! monsieur, I saw I had to do with an eccentric woman; she likes to be remarked upon; when she saw that everybody we passed looked at that shawl, she said to me: ‘You can keep your carriage, monsieur; I decide to take the shawl.’ While Monsieur Bigorneau,” he went on, pointing to the Byronic clerk, “was showing her the shawls, I examined my lady; she was looking askance at *you* to see what idea you had of her; her mind was much more on you than on the shawls. These Englishwomen have a peculiar distaste—for I can’t call it taste. They don’t know what they want, and some chance circumstance will decide them to take a thing they have been haggling over, rather than their own will. I recognized her as one of those women bored with their husbands and babies, regretfully virtuous, seeking emotions, and always posing as weeping willows.”

That is literally what the head of that establishment said.

It proves that while in other lands a shopkeeper may be nothing but a shopkeeper, in France, and above all in Paris, he may be a college-bred man, educated, loving either the arts, or sport, or the theatre, or consumed with a desire to become the successor of Monsieur Cunin-Gridaine, or colonel of the National guard, or member of the Council of the Seine, or judge of the Court of Commerce.

"Monsieur Adolphe," said the wife of the shop-keeper to the little blond clerk, "step round to the cabinet-maker's and order another cedar-box."

"And now," said the head-clerk, escorting du Ronceret and Bixiou to the door after they had selected a shawl for Madame Schontz, "we must hunt among our old shawls for another that can play the part of the Selim shawl."

THE END.

FAME AND SORROW,

And Other Stories.

TRANSLATED BY KATHARINE PRESCOTT WORMELEY.

12mo. Half Russia. Uniform with our edition of Balzac's Works. Price, \$1.50. In addition to this remarkable story, the volume contains the following, namely: "Colonel Chabert," "The Atheist's Mass," "La Grande Bretèche," "The Purse," and "La Grenadière."

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The six stories, admirably translated by Miss Wormeley, afford good examples of Balzac's work in what not a few critics have thought his chief specialty. It is certain that no writer of many novels wrote so many short stories as he; and it is equally as certain that his short stories are, almost without an exception, models of what such compositions ought to be. . . . No modern author, however, of any school whatever, has succeeded in producing short stories half so good as Balzac's best. Balzac did not, indeed, attempt to display his subtlety and deftness by writing short stories about nothing. Every one of his tales contains an episode, not necessarily, but usually, a dramatic episode. The first in the present collection, better known as "La Maison du Chat-qui-pelote," is really a short novel. It has all the machinery, all the interest, all the detail of a regular story. The difference is that it is compressed as Balzac only could compress; that here and there important events, changes, etc., are indicated in a few powerful lines instead of being elaborated; that the vital points are thrown into strong relief. Take the pathetic story of "Colonel Chabert." It begins with an elaboration of detail. The description of the lawyer's office might seem to some too minute. But it is the stage upon which the Colonel is to appear, and when he enters we see the value of the preliminaries, for a picture is presented which the memory seizes and holds. As the action progresses, detail is used more parsimoniously, because the *mise-en-scène* has already been completed, and because, also, the characters once clearly described, the development of character and the working of passion can be indicated with a few pregnant strokes. Notwithstanding this increasing economy of space, the action takes on a swifter intensity, and the culmination of the tragedy leaves the reader breathless.

In "The Atheist's Mass" we have quite a new kind of story. This is rather a psychological study than a narrative of action. Two widely distinguished characters are thrown on the canvas here, — that of the great surgeon and that of the humble patron; and one knows not which most to admire, the vigor of the drawing, or the subtle and lucid psychical analysis. In both there is rare beauty of soul, and perhaps, after all, the poor Anvergnat surpasses the eminent surgeon, though this is a delicate and difficult question. But how complete the little story is; how much it tells; with what skill, and in how delightful a manner! Then there is that tremendous haunting legend of "La Grande Bretèche," a story which has always been turned into more languages and twisted into more new forms than almost any other of its kind extant. What author has equalled the continuing horror of that unfaithful wife's agony, compelled to look on and assist at the slow murder of her entrapped lover? . . . Then the death of the husband and wife, — the one by quick and fiercer dissipation, the other by simple refusal to live longer, — and the abandonment of the accursed dwelling to solitude and decay, complete a picture, which for vividness, emotional force, imaginative power, and comprehensiveness of effects, can be said to have few equals in its own class of fiction. — *Kansas City Journal*.

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BALZAC IN ENGLISH.

An Historical Mystery.

Translated by KATHARINE PRESCOTT WORMELEY.

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An Historical Mystery is the title given to "Une Ténébreuse Affaire," which has just appeared in the series of translations of Honoré de Balzac's novels, by Katharine Prescott Wormeley. This exciting romance is full of stirring interest, and is distinguished by that minute analysis of character in which its eminent author excelled. The characters stand boldly out from the surrounding incidents, and with a fidelity as wonderful as it is truthful. Plot and counterplot follow each other with marvellous rapidity; and around the exciting days when Napoleon was First Consul, and afterward when he was Emperor, a mystery is woven in which some royalists are concerned that is concealed with masterly ingenuity until the novelist sees fit to take his reader into his confidence. The heroine, Laurence, is a remarkably strong character; and the love-story in which she figures is refreshing in its departure from the beaten path of the ordinary writer of fiction. Michu, her devoted servant, has also a marked individuality, which leaves a lasting impression. Napoleon, Talleyrand, Fouché, and other historical personages, appear in the tale in a manner that is at once natural and impressive. As an addition to a remarkable series, the book is one that no admirer of Balzac can afford to neglect. Miss Wormeley's translation reproduces the peculiarities of the author's style with the faithfulness for which she has hitherto been celebrated. — *Saturday Evening Gazette*.

It makes very interesting reading at this distance of time, however; and Balzac has given to the legendary account much of the solidity of history by his adroit manipulation. For the main story it must be said that the action is swifter and more varied than in many of the author's books, and that there are not wanting many of those cameo-like portraits necessary to warn the reader against slovenly perusal of this carefully written story; for the complications are such, and the relations between the several plots involved so intricate, that the thread might easily be lost and much of the interest be thus destroyed. The usual Balzac compactness is of course present throughout, to give body and significance to the work, and the stage is crowded with impressive figures. It would be impossible to find a book which gives a better or more faithful illustration of one of the strangest periods in French history, in short; and its attraction as a story is at least equalled by its value as a true picture of the time it is concerned with. The translation is as spirited and close as Miss Wormeley has taught us to expect in this admirable series. — *New York Tribune*.

One of the most intensely interesting novels that Balzac ever wrote is *An Historical Mystery*, whose translation has just been added to the preceding novels that compose the "Comédie Humaine" so admirably translated by Miss Katharine Prescott Wormeley. The story opens in the autumn of 1803, in the time of the Empire, and the motive is in deep-laid political plots, which are revealed with the subtle and ingenious skill that marks the art of Balzac. . . . The story is a deep-laid political conspiracy of the secret service of the ministry of the police. Talleyrand, M^{lle} de Cinq-Cygne, the Princess de Cadignan, Louis XVIII., as well as Napoleon, figure as characters of this thrilling historic romance. An absorbing love-story is also told, in which State intrigue plays an important part. The character-drawing is faithful to history, and the story illuminates French life in the early years of the century as if a calcium light were thrown on the scene.

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Albert Savarus, with Paz (La Fausse Maitresse) and Madame Firmiani. By HONORÉ DE BALZAC. Translated by Katharine Prescott Wormeley.

There is much in this, one of the most remarkable of his books, which is synonymous with Balzac's own life. It is the story of a man's first love for woman, his inspirer, the source from whom he derives his power of action. It also contains many details on his habits of life and work.

THE three short stories in this volume,—'Albert Savarus,' 'Paz' and 'Madame Firmiani'—are chips from that astounding workshop which never ceased its Hephestian labors and products until Balzac was no more. Short stories of this character flew from his glowing forge like sparks from an anvil, the playthings of an idle hour, the interludes of a more vivid drama. Three of them gathered here illustrate as usual Parisian and provincial life, two in a very noble fashion, Balzacian to the core. The third—'Albert Savarus'—has many elements of tragedy and grandeur in it, spoiled only by an abruptness in the conclusion and an accumulation of unnecessary horrors that chill the reader. It is a block of tragic marble hewn, not to a finish, but to a fine prophetic suggestion of what is to follow if —! The *if* never emerges from conditionality to fulfillment. The beautiful lines and sinuous curves of the nascent statue are there, not fully born of the encasing stone; what sculptors call the 'tenons' show in all their visibility—the supports and scaffoldings reveal their presence; the forefront is finished as in a Greek metope or Olympian tympanum, where broken Lapiths and Centaurs disport themselves; but the background is rude and primitive.

In 'Madame Firmiani' a few brilliant pages suffice to a perfect picture,—one of the few spotless pictures of this superb yet sinning magician so rich in pictures. It is French nature that Balzac depicts, warm with all the physical impulses, undisguised in its assaults on the soul, ingeniously sensual, odiously loose in its views of marriage and the marriage relation, but splendidly picturesque. In this brief romance noble words are wedded to noble music. In 'Paz' an almost equal nobility of thought—the nobility of self-renunciation—is attained. Balzac endows his men and women with happy millions and unhappy natures: the red ruby—the broken heart—blazes in a setting of gold. 'Paz,' the sublime Pole who loves the wife of his best friend, a Slav Cæsar, is no exception to the rule. The richest rhetoric, the sunniest colors, fail to counteract the Acherontian gloom of these lives and sorrows snatched from the cauldron of urban and rural France,—a cauldron that burns hotter than any other with its strange Roman and Celtic ardors. Balzac was perpetually dipping into it and drawing from it the wonderful and extraordinary incidents of his novels, incidents often monstrous in their untruth if looked at from any other than a French point of view. Thus, the devilish ingenuity of the jealous woman in 'Albert Savarus' would seem unnatural anywhere else than in the sombre French provinces of 1836,—a toadstool sprung up in the rank moonlight of the religious conventional system of education for women; but there, and then, and as one result of this system of repression, it seems perfectly natural. And so does the beautiful self-abnegation of Albert himself, that high-strung soul that could have been born only in nervous and passionate France.

As usual, Miss Wormeley's charming translation floats the reader over these pages in the swiftest and airiest manner.—*The Critic.*

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A MEMOIR OF HONORÉ DE BALZAC.

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A complete life of Balzac can probably never be written. The sole object of the present volume is to present Balzac to American readers. This memoir is meant to be a presentation of the man, — and not of his work, except as it was a part of himself, — derived from authentic sources of information, and presented in their own words, with such simple elucidations as a close intercourse with Balzac's mind, necessitated by conscientious translation, naturally gives. The portrait in this volume was considered by Madame de Balzac the best likeness of her husband.

Miss Wormeley's discussion of the subject is of value in many ways, and it has long been needed as a help to comprehension of his life and character. Personally, he lived up to his theory. His life was in fact austere. Any detailed account of the conditions under which he worked, such as are given in this volume, will show that this must have been the case; and the fact strongly reinforces the doctrine. Miss Wormeley, in arranging her account of his career, has, almost of necessity, made free use of the letters and memoir published by Balzac's sister, Madame Surville. She has also, whenever it would serve the purpose of illustration better, quoted from the sketches of him by his contemporaries, wisely rejecting the trivialities and frivolities by the exaggeration of which many of his first chroniclers seemed bent upon giving the great author a kind of opera-bouffe aspect. To judge from some of these accounts, he was flighty, irresponsible, possibly a little mad, prone to lose touch of actualities by the dominance of his imagination, fond of wild and impracticable schemes, and altogether an eccentric and unstable person. But it is not difficult to prove that Balzac was quite a different character; that he possessed a marvellous power of intellectual organization; that he was the most methodical and indefatigable of workers; that he was a man of a most delicate sense of honor; that his life was not simply devoted to literary ambition, but was a martyrdom to obligations which were his misfortune, but not his fault.

All this Miss Wormeley has well set forth; and in doing so she has certainly relieved Balzac of much unmerited odium, and has enabled those who have not made a study of his character and work to understand how high the place is in any estimate of the helpers of modern progress and enlightenment to which his genius and the loftiness of his aims entitle him. This memoir is a very modest biography, though a very good one. The author has effaced herself as much as possible, and has relied upon "documents" whenever they were trustworthy — *N. Y. Tribune.*

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PIERRETTE
AND
THE VICAR OF TOURS.
BY HONORÉ DE BALZAC.

Translated by Katharine Prescott Wormeley.

In *Pierrette*, which Miss Wormeley has added to her series of felicitous translations from the French master-fictionists, Balzac has made within brief compass a marvellously sympathetic study of the martyrdom of a young girl. *Pierrette*, a flower of Brittany, beautiful, pale, and fair and sweet, is taken as an undesired charge by sordid-minded cousins in Provinces, and like an exotic transplanted into a harsh and sour soil she withers and fades under the cruel conditions of her new environment. Incidentally Balzac depicts in vivid colors the struggles of two shop-keepers—a brother and sister, who have amassed a little fortune in Paris—to gain a foothold among the bourgeoisie of their native town. These two become the prey of conspirators for political advancement, and the rivalries thus engendered shake the small provincial society to its centre. But the charm of the tale is in the portrayal of the character of *Pierrette*, who understands only how to love, and who cannot live in an atmosphere of suspicion and ill-treatment. The story is of course sad, but its fidelity to life and the pathos of it are elements of unfailing interest. Balzac brings a score or more of people upon the stage, shows each one as he or she really is both in outward appearance and inward nature, and then allows motives and circumstances to work out an inevitable result. To watch this process is like being present at some wonderful chemical experiment where the ingredients are mixed with a deft and careful hand, and combine to produce effects of astonishing significance. The social genesis of the old maid in her most abhorrent form occupies much of Balzac's attention in *Pierrette*, and this theme also has a place in the story of *The Vicar of Tours*, bound up in this same volume. The vicar is a simple-minded priest who is happy enough till he takes up his quarters with an old maid landlady, who pesters and annoys him in many ways, and finally sends him forth despoiled of his worldly goods and a laughing-stock for the countryside. There is a great deal of humor in the tale, but one must confess that the humor is of a rather heavy sort, it being weighed down by a dominant satirical purpose. — *The Beacon*.

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For her latest translation of the Balzac fiction cycle, Miss Wormeley gives us the first and third parts of "Illusion Perdue," under the caption of "Lost Illusions," namely, "The Two Poets" and "Eve and David." This arrangement is no doubt a good one, for the readers are thus enabled to follow the consecutive fortunes of the Angoulême folk, while the adventures of Eve's poet-brother, Lucien, which occur in Paris and make a tale by themselves, are thus left for a separate publication. The novel, as we have it, then, belongs to the category of those scenes from provincial life which Balzac found so stimulating to his genius. This story, certainly, in some respects takes high rank among them. The character-drawing is fine: Lucien, the ambitious, handsome, weak-willed, selfish, and easily-sinning young bourgeois, is contrasted with David, — a touching picture of the struggling inventor, born of the people and sublimely one-purposed and pure in his life. Eve, the type of a faithful large-brained and larger-hearted wife, who supports her husband through all his hardships with unfaltering courage and kindness, is another noble creation. David inherits a poorish printing business from his skin-flint of a father, neglects it while devoting all his time and energy to his discovery of an improved method of making paper; and through the evil machinations of the rival printing firm of the Cointets, as well as the debts foisted on him by Lucien in Paris, he is brought into money difficulties and even into prison. But his invention, although sold at a sacrifice to the cunning Cointets, gets him out of the hole at last, and he and his good wife retire on a comfortable competency, which is augmented at the death of his father into a good-sized fortune. The seamy side of law in the provinces is shown up in Balzac's keen, inimitable way in the description of the winding of the coils around the unsuspecting David and the depiction of such men as the brothers Cointets and the shrewd little petifogging rascal, Petit Claud. The pictures of Angoulême aristocratic circles, too, with Lucien as high priest, are vivacious, and show the novelist's wonderful observation in all ranks of life. The bit of wild romance by which Lucien becomes the secretary of a Spanish grandee lends a fairy-tale flavor to the main episodes. Balzac, in whom is united the most lynx-eyed realism and the most extravagant romanticism, is ever and always one of the great masters in fiction of our century.

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We are beginning to look forward to the new translations of Balzac by Katharine Wormeley almost as eagerly as to the new works of the best contemporary writers. But, unlike the writings of most novelists, Balzac's novels cannot be judged separately. They belong together, and it is impossible to understand the breadth and depth of the great writer's insight into human life by reading any one volume of this remarkable series. For instance, we rise from the reading of this last volume feeling as if there was nothing high or noble or pure in life. But what would be more untrue than to fancy that Balzac was unable to appreciate the true and the good and the beautiful! Compare "The Lily of the Valley" or "Seraphita" or "Louis Lambert" with "The Duchesse of Langeais" and "Cousin Bette," and then perhaps the reader will be able to criticise Balzac with some sort of justice. — *Boston Transcript*.

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BALZAC IN ENGLISH.

THE BROTHERHOOD OF CONSOLATION.

(L'ENVERS DE L'HISTOIRE CONTEMPORAINE.)

By HONORÉ DE BALZAC.

1. Madame de la Chanterie. 2. The Initiate. Translated by Katharine Prescott Wormeley. 12mo. Half Russia. Price, \$1.50.

There is no book of Balzac which is informed by a loftier spirit than "L'Envers de l'Histoire Contemporaine," which has just been added by Miss Wormeley to her admirable series of translations under the title, "The Brotherhood of Consolation." The title which is given to the translation is, to our thinking, a happier one than that which the work bears in the original, since, after all, the political and historical portions of the book are only the background of the other and more absorbing theme, — the development of the brotherhood over which Madame de la Chanterie presided. It is true that there is about it all something theatrical, something which shows the French taste for making godliness itself histrionically effective, that quality of mind which would lead a Parisian to criticise the coming of the judgment angels if their entrance were not happily arranged and properly executed; but in spite of this there is an elevation such as it is rare to meet with in literature, and especially in the literature of Balzac's age and land. The story is admirably told, and the figure of the Baron Bourlac is really noble in its martyrdom of self-denial and heroic patience. The picture of the Jewish doctor is a most characteristic piece of work, and shows Balzac's intimate touch in every line. Balzac was always attracted by the mystical side of the physical nature; and it might almost be said that everything that savored of mystery, even though it ran obviously into quackery, had a strong attraction for him. He pictures Halpersohn with a few strokes, but his picture of him has a striking vitality and reality. The volume is a valuable and attractive addition to the series to which it belongs; and the series comes as near to fulfilling the ideal of what translations should be as is often granted to earthly things. — *Boston Courier*.

The book, which is one of rare charm, is one of the most refined, while at the same time tragic, of all his works. — *Public Opinion*.

His present work is a fiction beautiful in its conception, just one of those practical ideals which Balzac nourished and believed in. There never was greater homage than he pays to the book of books, "The Imitation of Jesus Christ." Miss Wormeley has here accomplished her work just as cleverly as in her other volumes of Balzac. — *N. Y. Times*.

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Balzac in English.

THE VILLAGE RECTOR.

BY HONORÉ DE BALZAC.

Translated by KATHARINE PRESCOTT WORMELEY. 12mo.

Half Russia. Price, \$1.50.

ONCE more that wonderful acquaintance which Balzac had with all callings appears manifest in this work. Would you get to the bottom of the engineer's occupation in France? Balzac presents it in the whole system, with its aspects, disadvantages, and the excellence of the work accomplished. We write to-day of irrigation and of arboriculture as if they were novelities; yet in the waste lands of Montagnac, Balzac found these topics; and what he wrote is the clearest exposition of the subjects.

But, above all, in "The Village Rector" is found the most potent of religious ideas,—the one that God grants pardon to sinners. Balzac had studied and appreciated the intensely human side of Catholicism and its adaptiveness to the wants of mankind. It is religion, with Balzac, "that opens to us an inexhaustible treasure of indulgence." It is true repentance that saves.

The drama which is unrolled in "The Village Rector" is a terrible one, and perhaps repugnant to our sensitive minds. The selection of such a plot, pitiless as it is, Balzac made so as to present the darkest side of human nature, and to show how, through God's pity, a soul might be saved. The instrument of mercy is the Rector Bonnet, and in the chapter entitled "The Rector at Work" he shows how religion "extends a man's life beyond the world." It is not sufficient to weep and moan. "That is but the beginning; the end is action." The rector urges the woman whose sins are great to devote what remains of her life to work for the benefit of her brothers and sisters, and so she sets about reclaiming the waste lands which surround her chateau. With a talent of a superlative order, which gives grace to Veronique, she is like the Madonna of some old panel of Van Eyck's. Doing penance, she wears close to her tender skin a haircloth vestment. For love of her, a man has committed murder and died and kept his secret. In her youth, Veronique's face had been pitted, but her saintly life had obliterated that spotted mantle of smallpox. Tears had washed out every blemish. If through true repentance a soul was ever saved, it was Veronique's. This work, too, has afforded consolation to many miserable sinners, and showed them the way to grace.

The present translation is to be cited for its wonderful accuracy and its literary distinction. We can hardly think of a more difficult task than the Englishing of Balzac, and a general reading public should be grateful for the admirable manner in which Miss Wormeley has performed her task. — *New York Times*.

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Balzac in English.

MEMOIRS OF TWO YOUNG MARRIED WOMEN.

BY HONORÉ DE BALZAC.

Translated by KATHARINE PRESCOTT WORMELEY. 12MO.


Half Russia. Price, \$1.50.

"THERE are," says Henry James in one of his essays, "two writers in Balzac,—the spontaneous one and the reflective one, the former of which is much the more delightful, while the latter is the more extraordinary." It is the reflective Balzac, the Balzac with a theory, whom we get in the "*Deux Jeunes Mariées*," now translated by Miss Wormeley under the title of "*Memoirs of Two Young Married Women*." The theory of Balzac is that the marriage of convenience, properly regarded, is far preferable to the marriage simply from love, and he undertakes to prove this proposition by contrasting the careers of two young girls who have been fellow-students at a convent. One of them, the ardent and passionate Louise de Chaulieu, has an intrigue with a Spanish refugee, finally marries him, kills him, as she herself confesses, by her perpetual jealousy and exaction, mourns his loss bitterly, then marries a golden-haired youth, lives with him in a dream of ecstasy for a year or so, and this time kills herself through jealousy wrongfully inspired. As for her friend, Renée de Maucombe, she dutifully makes a marriage to please her parents, calculates coolly beforehand how many children she will have and how they shall be trained; insists, however, that the marriage shall be merely a civil contract till she and her husband find that their hearts are indeed one; and sees all her brightest visions realized,—her Louis an ambitious man for her sake and her children truly adorable creatures. The story, which is told in the form of letters, fairly scintillates with brilliant sayings, and is filled with eloquent discourses concerning the nature of love, conjugal and otherwise. Louise and Renée are both extremely sophisticated young women, even in their teens; and those who expect to find in their letters the demure innocence of the Anglo-Saxon type will be somewhat astonished. The translation, under the circumstances, was rather a daring attempt, but it has been most felicitously done. — *The Beacon*.

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